

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

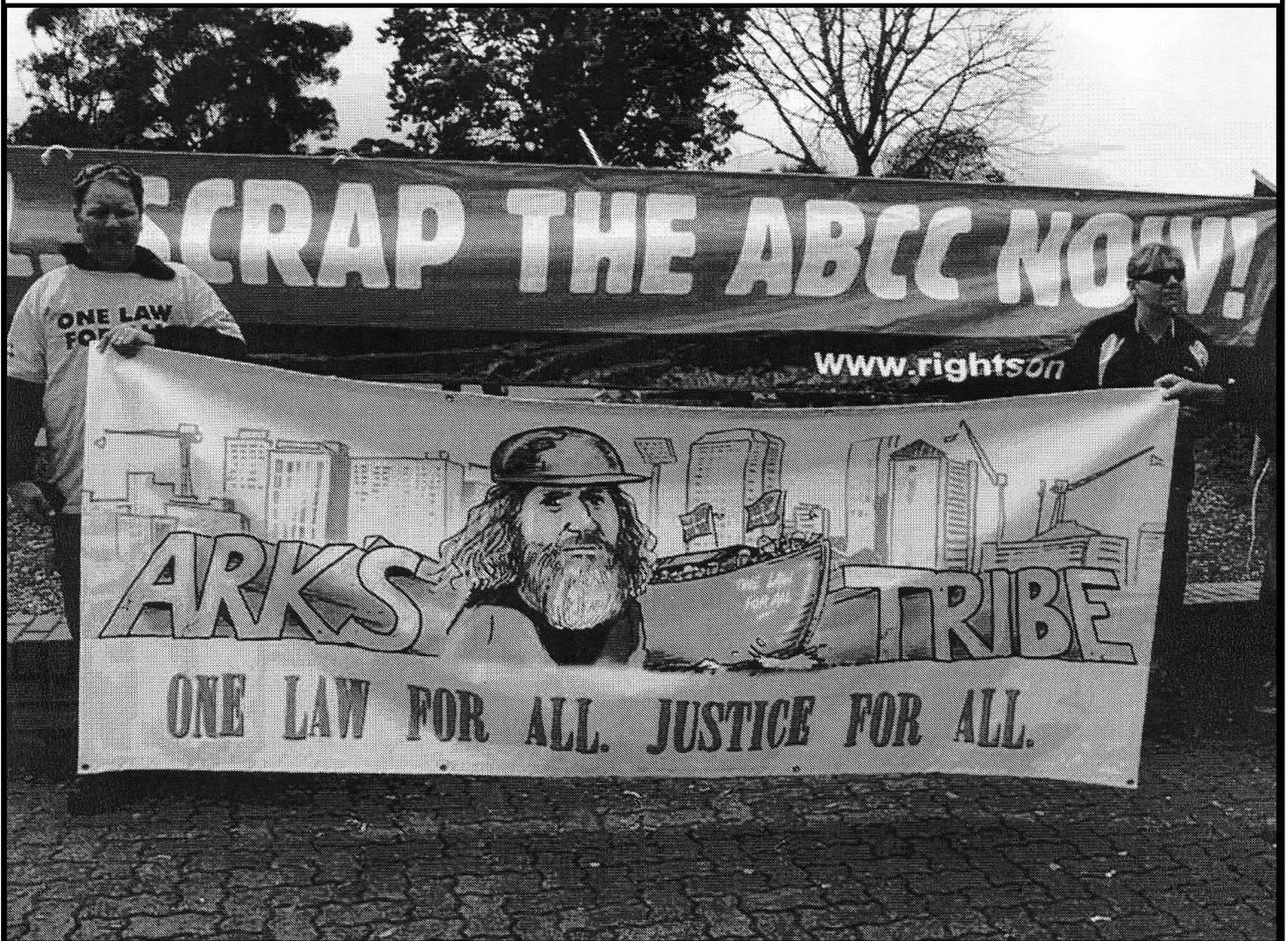


Sydney, Australia

Vol.28 No.3 (204) Sept.- Oct. 2009

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

INDUSTRIAL SOLIDARITY FOR ARK TRIBE!



Ark Tribe Rally P2; Growing Strong State P2; N.S.W. Railways News P3; State Transit Newsflash P5; Maritime Transport News P8 ; Victorian Railway News P9 ; Spanish Labour News P10 ; Britain Today P 12; Debate on Australian Shop Stewards' Network P13; Sydney Bus Drivers Wildcat Strike P13; Anarcho-Syndicalist Perspectives For Countering The Accelerated Employer Offensive & Economic Crisis P 14; Bulgarian Anarchism P17; News & Notes;

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

P.O. BOX 92

BROADWAY 2007 NSW

E-mail:

rworke@chaos.apana.org.au

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

AUSTRALIA: \$12 a year

OVERSEAS

\$25 (Aus.) by Air

\$20 (Aus.) by Sea mail

Free to Prisoners

Supporters Subs. \$40 pa

Receives copies of RW & ASN

Pamphlets as published. Send to the above as postal notes only & should be made out to Rebel Worker.

suburbs in Adelaide. 200 people I think, maybe nearing 300? Judging by us having given out 50 leaflets to less than a quarter of the crowd in about 2 minutes. 5 political forces made an appearance, including the greens, democrats, an independent, 'free Australia party' (newly formed party of 'motorcycle enthusiasts' (for anyone internationally, bikers have been targeted by absurd state powers recently, and have formed a political party) and Socialist Alliance. Didn't feel like the anarchist flag needed to be paraded as such with only two of us there, so we also didn't make a point of our being there (a little shy). Young Labor didn't seem to want to make voice of their appearance after the crowd chanted shame in regards to the Labor party's stance on the Australian building & construction commission, and their failure of any Labor politician to make an appearance. That was funny, jokes all-round.

And I think every union in the state had flags/members present. Speakers upheld an overall typical nationalistic tone (as usual), such as 'Ark Tribe is doing what every Aussie should be doing, standing up for their rights!' 'he's an Australian hero, like Ned Kelly or (some other bush-ranger),' which is a strange statement as it's clear that all those 'Aussie' bosses and politicians seem hell-bent on

destroying rights for the rest of us. The only time I felt like heckling was "like Ned Kelly, he's been pushed around, forced to do things he shouldn't have to..." where I was too shy to heckle with "but he still hasn't shot any cops!"

Would have got a laugh or two, especially from the "motorcycle enthusiasts". Anyway.. to my understanding a motion was passed at the ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) (amazingly..) congress, approving (not that it needed to be) nation-wide industrial action should Ark Tribe receive the \$22k fine or the 6 month jail time. My analysis is 2 options for the state: One is that the charges are dropped/suspended sentence, with the State not wanting to antagonise the situation because of obvious union supported worker militancy. The other is that the state will pull a Margaret Thatcher, and take a stand against worker militancy, and 'stick by their guns', something K.Rudd is always going on about. So as much as I don't think Rudd/Gillard want to fight it out with the unions.. I just as much think they do want to, to prove that they are in fact, almighty.

By Gabs

Thanks to Libcom

Solidarity For Ark Tribe

Ark tribe - 2nd person to be targeted by the ABCC's (Australian Building & Construction Commissioner) Gestapo powers - went to court on 11th of august facing six months jail.

He was called to an ABCC hearing after signing a petition on a building site at Flinders university regarding shocking safety on-site. He didn't attend the hearing, which is why he's facing jail time. Workers in most industries don't have to consider dying at work. There's not much in an office or fast food outlet that's gonna kill ya. But the government insists in the name of productivity, that construction workers should have no right to organise against dodgy bosses..

**11 /8/2009 Solidarity Rally
for Ark Tribe**

Yesterdays Rally in solidarity with Ark Tribe, a building worker being prosecuted by the ABCC, was fairly huge (I thought) considering it was at 10.30am in a courthouse in one of the furthest metropolitan

GREATEST THREAT

History has shown us the greatest threat to human freedom is the ability of the state to exercise power over its citizens. It is important to remember the atrocities committed by Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot were legal under their system of government. The removal of liberties and rights citizens have enjoyed for generations in Australia is dependent on who exercises power in parliament. Over the past two decades hundreds of pieces of state and federal legislation have been passed that have removed our rights and liberties to protect us from "terrorists" who hate us because of the freedoms we enjoy.

The irony of passing legislation that removes our rights and -liberties to protect our rights of inflation, and liberties seems to have been lost on governments around the world that are falling over themselves to find new ways of stripping away rights and liberties millions of people have died for to protect individuals and minorities from the arbitrary exercise of state power.

The attempts by the Rudd Labor government to further remove what few rights and liberties Australians enjoy by introducing powers that give the Federal Police the power to conduct warrantless searches, is just the last in a long series of legislative changes that have transformed Australia in the past two decades.

Under Australian law three ministers of the Crown can unleash the Australian Armed Forces against the Australian people if they believe Commonwealth interests may be threatened. Members of the Australian Armed Forces are legally indemnified for anything they do (even murder) during this period. The Federal Attorney General can, at any time, ban any organisation he wants to because he has been advised that organisation may pose a threat to Commonwealth interests. Citizens can be arrested, detained, interrogated and jailed for up to seven years because they refuse to answer questions because they may inadvertently have information 'that may help the authorities in their investigations. This is just the tip of the iceberg of a raft of legislation that makes a mockery of the idea that Australians live in a free society.

The problem is particularly acute in Australia because individuals do not enjoy rights in the Australian constitution. In Australia the government giveth and the government taketh away. Maybe, just maybe when a future Federal government with the help of a pliant Opposition, passes legislation in Australia's parliament to intern Australians first born to protect us from some perceived terrorist threat, will Australians begin to realise what is happening in this country.

Thanks to the Anarchist Age

N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

Rebel Worker: What's been the latest at Central?

Station Assistant: There were two rallies held in late June to protest Rail Corp's planned massive staff cuts as part of the City Rail Station Staffing Review. The smaller was organised by local grassroots activists and the larger was organised by the union officials. At the union officials organised rally, there was a significant presence by police with sniffer dogs, and transit officers in uniform and plain clothes. As there were no disturbances, the police shortly departed. There was also a significant presence by the media camera crews and photographers. Despite this media attendance there was no coverage in the press or the TV. The union officials who addressed the rally presented the usual lame duck approach for us to contact our local members of parliament if we want to fight the Staffing Review.

"Top Secret" Rally at Central- Grassroots not Invited!

On Friday 7th August, there was further rally at Central. It consisted of a Unions NSW and Rightwing ALP "rent-a-crowd" to confront the NSW Transport Minister and later on the NSW Premier Nathan Rees who were visiting the station over the staff cuts issue. Despite the great opportunity for a major protest and media publicity to inspire grass roots resistance in the fight against the staff cuts across the station network, the union officials refused to advise union members at Central and other stations about the protest, thus ensuring a lack of attendance by workers! It appears the officials didn't want their rightwing ALP political masters to be upset by a crowd of angry rail workers. Whilst the other protests/rallies failed to gain major media exposure, this rally which was attended by a tiny handful of the "rent-a-crowd" and Phil Kessey Acting National RTBU Secretary gained coverage on Channel 7 News. It appears to be a media stunt to raise the profile of the Rightwing ALP's candidate in the upcoming election for National RTBU Secretary

to be held in October of this year. Click on your computer on the below link to view the media stunt.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kis567IcMqo>

RW: What is the role of the ALP Governments in regard to cutbacks in the railways over the years?

SA: ALP Govt's have played an important role historically in cutbacks like the current station reforms. This was particu-

by workers dazzled by the bosses' money. Associated with the 4% pa pay rise was also large bonuses due to back dating provisions. In some cases these bonuses amounted to \$20,000. New people who came on the job at the time of the Olympics however missed the bonus and only received the pay rise. Later, RailCorp tried to recover much of the bonuses via claims of bogus overpayments.

RW: How are staff at Central responding to the planned staff review?

SA: Many are doing their best to keep their jobs. Whilst some have more a "laissez faire" and say "let it happen". In the hope of saving their jobs, some are providing the bosses with information which further down the track will lead to the abolition of many more jobs. Currently we are facing massive job losses of 100 out of 250 operational positions with 100 staff on shifts each day.

RW: What are some of the likely negative aspects for staff and commuters?

SA: One form which the cutbacks are taking associated with the staff review is the cutting out of shifts at stations on the weekends and so reducing workers' wages. Whilst shifts

are being retained for Monday to Friday. In certain sectors staffing has been hard hit such as the Southern Line and at Circular Quay. The targeting of Circular Quay is particularly counterproductive as it's a major tourist area and should have maximum staffing. The staff cuts there, have led to the closing down of the tourist information centre. Associated with the loss of experienced staff is the loss of the capacity to provide adequate tourism and passenger information. Whilst RailCorp is neglecting tourism information training for staff at Burwood. As part of the reforms many will have to travel considerably further to the station where they will work from. So some may have to travel to Hornsby and the Central Coast. Will staff be compensated with meal and travelling allowances for the increased travelling? Whilst many cleaning staff will be transferred to PFM (Train Presentation). However they will have no loss in pay.

RW: What are the latest moves to abolish most Transit Officer jobs?



Grassroots organised protest at Central against station staff cuts 11/6/09

larly the case in regard to their role in the closure of Darling Harbour and the Parcels Office. The Rees ALP is now following suit and is pursuing another cutback despite ever more people using the rail system.

RW: How are the reforms being implemented?

SA: Currently workers are being required to attend the Burwood Training College where their jobs are being assessed. However, a similar procedure was used in 1998 as part of Job Redesign. Are these assessments a means to demean staff to encourage them to leave the job? To counter grass roots resistance to the job losses, the union officials are also arguing that RailCorp has already bought workers' compliance not just with the Enterprise Agreement approved in 2008, but also with the Job Redesign Enterprise Agreement. At that time the Agreement which was sold to workers by the union officials without adequate opportunity for them to seriously consider and debate its negative ramifications in the shape of major job losses. It was signed off

SA: Latest news is that these moves are on hold.

RW: What's happening with drug testing?

SA: There has been an interesting new development. RailCorp contract Doctors are advising workers not to turn up for work on days they will be affected by medications which they are taking. So as not to be

a candidate for the random drug testing. However, there is no RailCorp policy in place to pay workers for their time off the job for this reason.

Stopping RailCorp's Wrecking Ball

by Crimson Coconut

Across the CityRail network the devastation of the Station Staff Reviews is being hammered home like a wreckers ball on a derelict building. A massive loss of 50% of job positions on stations is now the new reality and workers are being pushed into positions against their will and with great resentment.

While most rail staff are upset and disappointed at the outcome and the affect of changes on their jobs only a handful have shown any fight at all. Just about all appeals to the unions for support fell on silent and fallow ground. Yes, there were a couple of half hearted attempts to organise rallies at locations where there was some militancy such as the South Coast, Central, Hornsby and Gosford. These were poorly organised affairs which were disjointed and not linked and never sought any any real objectives except to let off a little anger and thus never really amounted to putting any pressure on management.

The organised rallies were not well attended by rail staff even though it was their own jobs on the line. Militancy, in the form of stopping work to attend the rallies would have added some impetus to the cause of station workers. This option was never entertained by the unions who always cite the legal punitive measures which can be used against them.

When the law is unjust and the bosses can do what they like to their employees (who have no other recourse to defend their positions) then disobedience and unlawful behaviour becomes the duty of every one of us. What is the point of having a union if it can't defend us against the worst aspects of an employer who is swinging the wrecking ball? These are unions who are less about defending their members and more about keeping the status quo, implementing Labor Party policy and balancing union accounts. They have shown no leadership at all in any of the struggles that have confronted rail workers. There has to be a recognition the union leadership – or

more correctly, the lack of it – was the main obstacle to station staff combating the reforms and falling for the debacle that was EA 2008.

It is hardly surprising that the unions have behaved this way. Most of their leaders are entrenched in the Labour Party hierarchy and are servants of Labor's corporate men-



tal. Take the RTBU's deputy Phillip Kessey for instance. Some years ago Phil was shipped off to the United States to attend the Harvard Trade Union Program, the usual grooming process for right wing trade union leaders. NSW State Secretary of the RTBU, Nick Lewocki has also served his time at the Harvard Trade Union School.

Joan Coxsedge, a well respected former Labor MP from Victoria, writing in article entitled "Subverting Australia's Labour Movement" describes the Harvard School Trade Union Program this way:

Quote;

.... "During my stay I looked into the Harvard University Trade Union Program, funded by the Harvard Foundation, because I wanted to learn more about its background and connections. I discovered there were two Harvard Foundations. One Harvard Foundation was genuine. It sat squarely in the centre of the university and was legitimately involved in student affairs. After talking with the people who ran it we found that, contrary to popular belief in Australia, the Harvard University had

no connection whatsoever with the Harvard University Trade Union Program. I eventually located the "union" group's headquarters a little distance away from the campus and nabbed copies of their literature. The Harvard Trade Union Program Alumni read like a who's who of right-wing unionism. The first Australian to graduate was Ralph Willis in 1964, then working at the ACTU. He was followed by right-wing power-brokers Barrie Unsworth (1966), and Joe Thompson (1968), federal president and NSW state organiser for the Vehicle Builders Union.

Other material indicated, however, that the funding body – the Harvard Foundation – wasn't created until July 1976, so who footed the bill between 1964 and 1976? The initiative to set up the 1976 Harvard Foundation came from AMCHAM Australia, the local branch of the American Chamber of Commerce and agent for US big business in Australia, with "the blessing" of carefully selected senior unionists. Its letterhead named 68 trustees. All were top executives of large multinationals and Australian corporations such as Sir Peter Abeles and Hugh Morgan. Other big companies represented included Comalco, Du Pont, Rothmans, Chrysler, Uniroyal, Mobil Australia, Boral and Amatil – not a group renowned for its sympathies with unionism. Four union officials were listed as trustees, along with Bob Hawke, Neville Wran, Ian MacPhee and Professor Donald Gilson. Another name stood out - Peer da Silva. Described as working for the US giant Honeywell, he had earlier been CIA Chief of Station for Australia. The 68 were each supposed to kick in \$2500 for the "honour" of being part of the scheme. Aspects of the Foundation program were managed by Macquarie University, thereby guaranteeing tax deductibility of 42% for contributors. Program participants – four unionists each year with "proven leadership potential" – received return air fares, tuition, accommodation and study materials, and \$250 a week pin-money for the duration of the 13-week indoctrination course. At its conclusion, the US government also gave each "student" a daily allowance for four weeks of travel around the US to "liaise with their

US counterparts, solidify friendships and see those principles learned at Harvard in action". Joe O'Donnell, described as executive director of the Harvard University Trade Union Program, was the same bloke brought out to Australia in 1977 by an outfit called Enterprise Australia to give us the right-wing line on trade unionism. Enterprise Australia was one of many well-funded, US-modelled organisations zealously promoting Friedmanite capitalist ideology. It was launched in Australia in 1976 by former Liberal minister Sir Allen Fairhall, on behalf of the Australian Free Enterprise Association, "to help Australians understand that our economic and business freedoms are the bulwark of our personal liberties". Exactly what corporations get for their money from outfits like the Harvard Foundation was spelled out by managing director of Koppers Australia, Brooks Wilson, to corporate executives attending the 20th Annual General Meeting of AMCHAM in 1981. He said: "there is one very important thing this chamber has taken a lead in doing. And that is in terms of helping union leaders to become educated. Since the program started ... 12 or 15 trade unionists have been and returned. They feel its been *an experience that opened their eyes to how the system can work — in other words, to the benefit of everybody. You don't have to keep knocking it down; you can work with it.*"...

It is rumoured that Phillip Kessey, of the RTBU state branch, is now making his bid for the Secretary's job at the RTBU National Office, an, supposed, umbrella group of all the state branches. The last RTBU rally held at Central, confronting

Nathan Rees, was probably more about getting his "militant" message out through the media to voters in the union who don't know him.

So what can we, as workers, do about this deplorable situation?

The situation should never be allowed to arise again where we are left in the lurch, lied too, not consulted and cajoled into



supporting an agreement that was sold on the basis of being harmless. Those union leaders and delegates who failed to show leadership should be expunged from the union movement and replaced by delegates who have the members interests at heart. This lesson should not be forgotten when the time comes to elect office bearers to the union office.

There are aspects of Enterprise Agreement 2008 which some of us believe were breached by management. The RTBU has highlighted the failure of RailCorp to fill vacant positions before the review as one of them and which they are contesting in the IRC.

There are others which we at RW would like to get a legal opinion about. The "No Disadvantage Test" is one shady area that could be explored. I won't go into that here

as it may be something that can be discussed in a future Sparks article. However if a majority of members vote to rescind an agreement the enterprise agreement can be annulled by the Industrial Relations Commission – something that we can focus on if there is enough support.

For all of these actions to work there must be much greater support from everyone who has vested interest in public transport

and self preservation. All of those who have been content to sit on the sidelines need to engage in the process of protecting themselves and their jobs as well of those colleagues who come under attack We all need to forget our differences and start working together, supporting each other. Someone from Train Crewing was saying that "they (station

staff) deserve it". This type of attitude is unhelpful as Train Crew looks like it will be in firing line after the new timetable settles down. Station staff should support them when and if they come under attack.

Many of the changes made by management may simply fall down as being unworkable, or if there is a hue and cry from the public about poor support services they may eventually cause political repercussions. The introduction of the new timetable will be a watershed in this regard as it is one that may not endear the public to the Government or RailCorp. Our other task should be reach out to the public for support, be that in the community or in our workplaces. Without public support and the support of our fellow workers we can do very little.

STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Rebel Worker: What are your impressions of the bus layup area at Railway Square?

Waverley Busie: It's currently a shambles. It's being jammed with Hills buses which are congregating in the area taking over one half of the spaces to pickup outward journeys for 378's, 311's, 393's, 395's and 372's, together with North Shore depot buses. Resulting in buses double parking. I'm not knocking the drivers. However, the spaces in the layup area were not de-

signed for so many buses. In this once peaceful place, there are now 50-60 buses sitting around in the afternoon. A mystery is why the Hills buses are coming to this space, when they come all the way from the North West via the M2. One partial solution to the problem would be to have 4-5 buses parking up on the railway colonnade. There appears to be too much backslapping between the STA and private bus companies, in regard to the use of the layup area, but no thought regarding where do we park. Its causing more competition between drivers and more stress.

The STA needs to find a solution in the shape of a larger space to cater for the vastly increased bus numbers and to stop backslapping the private bus companies.

RW: What's the latest with the STA's plan to cut the 2nd loop on the 311?

WB: I believe a likely pressure group behind the cut back to the 2nd loop on the run were the residents on the lower level of the exclusive Manhattan Apartments, which face the harbour. Following the initial construction of the units 10 years ago, the residents made complaints about noise from the 311's which stop underneath their windows. It may have happened that they suc-

ceeded in swaying the STA. The STA proceeded with the cuts to the run removing the 2nd loop and having the run terminating at Gresham Street. Recently passengers complained to me that they had to walk from the Quay to catch the 311. Whilst in the afternoons, taxis are invading the bus zones on Gresham Street to pick up passengers. The STA has been taking a very lethargic and pathetic approach by failing to take action to curb the taxis. Latest news is that the STA appears to have burnt its fingers through the affair. According to a local resident who came on my bus and spread the news, on the last night of the Winter Sitting of the NSW Parliament Lower House, a motion was passed reinstating the route. In September, when Parliament resumes, the motion will have to go before the Upper House to be approved. It's looking to be an important victory for local residents and for us, bus drivers.

RW: What's the latest with the Metro Buses?

WB: Tempe Depot has been reopened as the depot for the bendi Metro Buses. Currently the STA is looking for 60 drivers for the Tempe Metros. Drivers need to be aware, that a transfer to Tempe, may have significant negative ramifications such as a lack of overtime and a loss of seniority. If and when they want to return to the other depots.

RW: What's the latest news in regard to the STA moves to generalise prepaid ticketing for bus services?

WB: Its proving to be quite a sham and so flawed its pathetic. It fails to take account of faulty tickets. Recently in the Bondi area, particularly the Southern end of Bondi Beach, many passengers have purchased Travel 10 tickets from a large faulty batch. After 1 or 2 rides, the tickets are not operating in the Green Machines properly. Consequently quite an uproar has broken out amongst passengers, shop keepers and bus drivers. Passengers are worried they may be booked by inspectors for having free rides on the tickets. Shopkeepers are facing flak from passengers for selling crook tickets. Whilst drivers are being obliged to field complaints about the tickets from passengers, which isn't part of our job. Overall this foul up is costing the STA thousands of dollars, which could pay for new buses and more bus services. Typically the STA bosses are showing no leadership regarding informing drivers and passengers about what they need to do in the event of the faulty tickets. It's totally unfair for passengers and drivers.

RW: What are your impressions of the depot Occupational, Health & Safety Committee?

WB: It was established ten years ago and management continues to fail to take action on a range of OH&S issues such as cracks in the concrete and the old toilets, which the committee has raised. To get some serious action by management on these issues the grass roots has to take possession of OH&S issues and put some pressure on the bosses to tackle the problems.

RW: What's happening with the depot gym?

WB: Over 20 years ago when I first came on the job, there were much more opportunities for creating things around the workplace. With the bosses depriving us of much in the way of facilities and space for entertainment, apart from TV's and computers, the gym is ever more important for us. To attract more attendance, the gym is



currently holding a "boot camp" program. It involves two personal trainers, Darren Hockey and a trainer from outside. Currently, they will be at the gym on Mondays and Wednesdays at lunch time. They will advise members on fitness issues. Take the opportunity to get some truthful answers to your fitness and weight questions. It's important to get over the barriers some have about attending the gym. Ask yourself, is this barrier stopping you from coming along? It's important to make the decision to become fit and healthy which has benefits in the shape of living longer and not carrying excess weight. Those who don't regularly exercise often suffer depression and anxiety and severe mid life crises with notions that life has no meaning. In my case before I became a gym enthusiast I initially had concerns about developing a bulky appearance through gym exercises. It's important that members take the opportunity to attend, otherwise the trainers will cease coming along.

You all, lounge lizards and computer nerds bring your fitness equipment, gym clothes and boots and head off to our gym!

RW: What's news with the canteen?

WB: George, the chef who is quite a lively and boisterous character is retiring. Over the six years he's been our cook he has provided us with European style, good healthy food. Despite being able to retire earlier he continued to perform the job, which involves getting up early in the morning. He will be sadly missed. We wish him well. Following retirement he is planning to embark on an overseas trip. To show our appreciation of George, please consider signing a card which will be circulated.

RW: What's happening with the cabbies?

WB: I recently caught a taxi and heard loud engine noise caused by bearings problems. I asked the cabbie about the problem. He told me that as the RTA has ceased carrying out regular inspections of taxi bases and taxis, the owners are now not forced to have taxis repaired before serious problems develop. Consequently, taxis are facing a serious threat on the OH&S front. With privatisation, we as bus driver are also likely to face a severe decline in bus maintenance and safety on the road.

RW: What's the latest with changes to the running times?

Waverley Driver: The STA bosses proceeded with the introduction of the new tighter running times for routes operated by Waverley. Our union rep has introduced a late running book to monitor the running times and prove they won't work. Since the introduction of the new running times, the 400's have proven to be quite hard hit with buses often running an hour late.

RW: What's happening with the depot fleet?

WD: 15 gas buses which have had faulty mirrors, have now returned to service following the rectifying of the problem.

RW: What's the latest news on the road?

WD: On Thursday night 16/7/09, a driver on a 333 was assaulted by a passenger wielding a bottle. In self defence the driver fought back and knocked out his assailant. The police were called. However instead of charging the passenger, who got away scot free, the police charged the driver with assault. This police action, flies in the face of the guarantees they have previously made to us, that they will always support the driver in any such incident. A petition was subsequently circulated at Waverley to demand that the union provides the driver with a Barrister to defend himself in court against the as-

sault charge. There are rumblings amongst drivers, that if the union takes no action to vigorously defend the driver, that they will take industrial action to defend the driver with or without approval from the officials.

Other important news is that bans have been imposed on 3 dangerous bus stops. At our union meeting on Thursday 6/8/09 we voted to ban the stop at the corner of Darling Point and New South Head Roads going toward the Edgecliff Terminus due to the dangerous situation involving turning right through 3 lanes of traffic to reach the stop. All Eastern suburbs depots have banned the stop on the corner of Liverpool and Elizabeth Streets inward bound toward the Quay, again due to the hazards associated with turning right through 3 lanes of traffic. In the case of the stop in bound near Taylor Square, on Oxford Street, near Flinders Street, a ban from 9pm Friday to 5am Saturday has also been imposed by Eastern Suburbs depots in view of hazards associated with cars being parked in the bus stop. In response to this direct action, State Transit is currently reviewing these bus stops. Latest news, is that Waverley Depot drivers have temporarily lifted the ban on the bus stop near Edgecliff following a request from the Industrial Relations Commission and pending the outcome of an IRC inspection of the problems with the stop. The bans on the other stops are still in place.

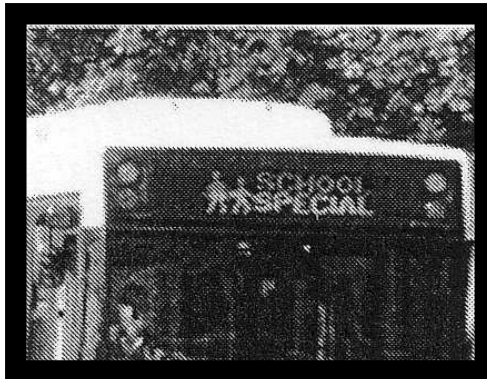
LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Watch Out! There's a Peeping Tom About!

RW: What's the latest at the depot?

Leichhardt Busie: We've got quite a serious problem at the moment. Complaints have been made by many drivers about the "Big Brother" problem at the depot. The bosses are brazenly disregarding the guarantee that we were given when the new digital cameras on the buses were first introduced that they would not be used in disciplinary matters. One of the supervisors who fancies himself as a sort of "peeping tom" has been noticed locked

away in his office poring over digital camera footage apparently in regard to certain drivers targeted for disciplinary action. He particularly surveys the footage to find some excuse to harass them and fit them up on charges. Also of concern to me is that anyone can ring up the depot and make a complaint about a driver, without supplying full name and address. Resulting, in the bosses checking the digital camera footage on the driver. As a result, we face our job being put under the microscope and the bosses' harassment as a result of some anonymous troublemaker. Its



urgent that a stop work union meeting is held over the issue to consider action such as a ban on going into the office.

Some positive news, is that I have noticed lately we are being given more consideration for late running. In the past we were often harassed by the bosses over the issue.

RW: How are things with the depot renovations?

LB: The renovations are almost completed. The bosses offices are now located above us. The gym is in a small room with little space for a handful of drivers to exercise. The new no-smoking policy has been implemented. However, there is no designated space for smokers to use. Associated with the depot renovations are moves to expand the depot fleet from the current 140 – 150. Drivers from Burwood are particularly being approached to come to Leichhardt as part of the fleet enlargement and the difficulties which Burwood depot has with bus operations due to heavy traffic on Parramatta Road.

So let's look at the figures in the Report. There was a pay increase for the 8 elected full time officials collectively of \$220,000.00 p.a. which BRINGS THEIR COLLECTIVE SALARIES TO \$1,400,000.00 PA. THAT'S RIGHT. ONE MILLION FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. It doesn't end there. The report states that these officials were paid on their behalf approximately \$350,000.00 in Super ..that's about that about \$43,750.00 each. Would you like that amount of money? It's paid by you, the members.

RYDE DEPOT NEWS

RW: How are things at Ryde?

Night Rider: Management is shortening the early broken to about 7 hours. Soon we will not need a meal break, a coffee break will do.

The union delegate seems to be a law to himself. After a new driver complained to the union about how some drivers get a lot of Sundays, he changed the system. So if don't want your Sunday, its handed to the rosters section to distribute. Is this fair? You swap shifts for personal reasons, but his change benefits management, more than drivers.

I hope the new depot managers reverses this change. It's about time that the current union delegate put changes to the members approve and not act as a dictator. He only won the position by a few votes, but I think he is a one time man.

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

Our downsizing is about to start in October. It is said by the union that twenty five buses will be transferred to Leichhardt along with the holiday relief drivers.

There is a dispute coming about drivers displaced off the rosters when we lose lines of work. It is said that a block system will transfer surplus drivers to Leichhardt. Is this fair? Just because you're last on, you drop to the scrap! The person may have been on a roster for years. The last time a roster was lost, the displaced drivers became reserves. Why this time? I hope the same happens to surplus management right out of the depot onto the dole queue. At a recent depot union meeting Malone, RTBU NSW Bus Division President, stated that the union's hands are tied and management could do what they like. I wish he would go one step and Retire and maybe someone else could handle State Transit better.

Where has our money gone?

Comrades, have you downloaded a copy of the 2008 NSW RTBU Branch Operating Report from the net?

This is the first report available for many years. The pressure from the members is mounting, so keep it up. For there are rumours that the NSW State Secretary Nick may retire this year.

I can only guess at what Nick gets paid, but I get a figure of about \$550,000.00 last year. This is a guess, but I have been told second hand that he got a 10% pay rise after the bad RailCorp Enterprise Agreement, the union pushed on members, last year.

This leaves the other elected officials to receive about \$225,000.00 p.a. each. This is still okay in my books. Members please take an interest in the events of the union, to stop this !!!!!!!!!!!!!

MARITIME INDUSTRY NEWS

Fremantle wharfies fight re-trenchments – and WIN!

Wharfies at DP World Fremantle have fought off the company's push to make the workforce pay for the current economic downturn. A 24-hour stoppage on May 18 and a two and a half week campaign to make the terminal the safest site in Australia have stopped planned compulsory redundancies.

DP World management played hardball for months. They wanted four retrenchments from among the 30-odd maintenance workers. The company also wanted to postpone upgrades that came out of last November's EBA (twelve wharfies to permanent and twelve to VSE). Delegates had agreed to the delay, but wanted a firm trigger mechanism to ensure the upgrades occurred when conditions improved.

On the issue of retrenchments a compromise position had been reached by MUA national official Jim Tannock and a majority of the local site committee: accept two voluntary redundancies and rearrange the maintenance roster to share a reduction in earnings to keep the other jobs. Management arrogantly rejected this compromise and pushed ahead with the compulsory retrenchments.

Wharfies strike back

MUA members were fed up. A stopwork meeting was held on the evening shift of May 18. With solid support from the WA MUA officials, a resolution to take indefinite strike action and immediately walk off the job was voted for unanimously. Wharfies on the night and following day shift had the situation explained to them and were urged to attend a mass meeting at 4pm the next day.

DP World scurried to the Industrial Commission and won a return to work order (a "section 496") in order to force the strikers back to work the next day.

At the mass meeting the next afternoon, a recommendation to go back to work and begin a campaign to make the Fremantle DP World terminal the safest site in Australia was accepted unanimously.

DP World accused the workforce of a "go-slow" and assigned a supervisor to document any evidence. But this amounted to nothing, as safety was improved.

All they found was a workforce diligently following every single safety rule to the letter (along with a regrettable reduction in container movements).

DP World management had another trick up its sleeve. MUA members later discovered a "secret file" that the company compiled – complete with photographs that management claim show delegates turn-

The fight in Fremantle was a defensive struggle which was forced to compromise. But it shows that we CAN take on the bosses and win. It once again proves the truth in the slogan of the militant Builders Labourers' Federation: "If you don't fight – you lose!"



ing workmates back at the front gate!

After two and a half weeks of campaigning to make the terminal the safest site in Australia, management decided to come back to the negotiating table.

Management back down

DP World finally agreed to accept terms that were little different from those previously put forward in negotiations.

These include: no forced redundancies (with a reduction in maintenance roster hours and pay to keep the two jobs that would have been lost); four new permanent and four VSE jobs to replace those who had previously retired; an agreed trigger mechanism based on container volumes for backfilling the postponed EBA upgrades; all supplementaries who have qualified to go to GWE to do so; and all disciplinary letters arising from the 24-hour stoppage to be set aside.

The action taken in Fremantle shows that maritime workers do not have to succumb to economic blackmail. We did not create this economic downturn – and we should not be made to pay for it.

STOP PRESS: DP World looked set to target two Fremantle delegates. Disciplinary letters alleging breaches of the DP World Code of Conduct were sent to the "ringleaders". However management decided that taking on delegates who were acting on behalf of members could provoke a showdown with the WA MUA. DP World decided to take no further action against the two delegates.

[Article from "Vigilance" No. 42 (July 20, 2009). "Vigilance" is a socialist bulletin for MUA members in Sydney produced by Shane Bentley – the "Port Botany Wharfie". See www.vigilancebulletin.org].

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

At V/Line we have conductors based at various locations across Victoria. This article is about an unfair dismissal of a conductor based at a country depot. Two conductors have come forward to talk about this unfortunate event. Once again names have been changed.

Rebel Worker: Could you tell us what happened?

Emily and Ezra: About eighteen months ago a conductor was dismissed. The dismissal was that quick, that the other Victorian conductors did not know what had happened.

RW: This is incredible.

Emily: Yes it was. I was in the same class as this conductor and she was quite dedicated to the job and if her employment had have been continued, she may have become union delegate.

Ezra: I work at a different depot to Emily but what I saw of this conductor, she would have been a good union delegate.

RW: Could you tell us about the conductor class.

Emily: In the class, she stood up to management over the termination of a trainee conductor who failed the ticket checking exam. The trainee was a nervous person. He had his heart set on being a conductor and he had left his previous job for a career at V/Line.

RW: Was a former on-train manager involved in the termination of the trainee?

Emily: Yes he was and this trainee was terminated fast, that we did not know he was gone. You see the sacked conductor tried to help the trainee. In fact she challenged management over his termination.

Ezra: Yes she did. At the time, there was a vacancy for a platform supervisor at Spencer Street which this trainee could have been placed into until he could come back in a future conductor class.

RW: Why wasn't he placed into the position.

Emily: You see this on-train manager wanted to put fear into the class and as we were trainees we could be terminated at short notice.

RW: I have been informed this on-train manager was put into another management position.

Ezra: Yes and good riddance to him. Since he has been removed and in four subsequent conductor classes there have been no terminations for failing the ticket checking exam.

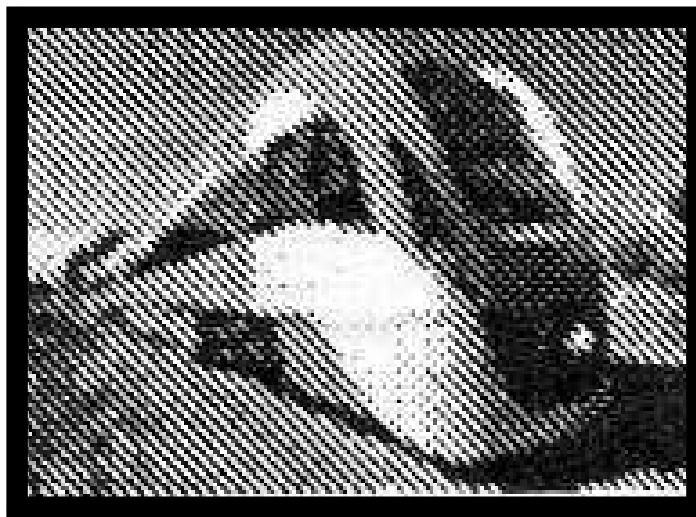
RW: What about the sacked conductor?

Emily: Because this conductor stood up to management in regard to the dismissal of the trainee, management tried to blacken her name.

RW: What happened?

Emily: Management spread malicious smears about the conductor during her training.

RW: What eventually led to her termination?



Emily: When she applied for the conductor's position, she was told she would be in a relieving position at the depot. In the relieving capacity, she would have to work in the office at the station relieving the office staff.

Ezra: A woman who works in the office at that particular station is difficult to work with. It is either her way or no way. She is not liked by the other conductors and her husband was the union delegate for the conductors at the depot.

RW: This is a conflict of interest.

Emily: Yes it is. What happened was that the conductor liked her job as a conductor and wanted to stay on the trains. She told this to the regional manager. He called her to a meeting and at the meeting because she had been only working for a month after training she was terminated. The union delegate who was to defend her agreed with management's decision.

RW: Could a compromise have been reached?

Ezra: The relief job could have been offered to the other conductors at the depot as it would have given them an opportu-

nity to learn office work. The woman in the office would have to learn to work with other persons. Human Resources would not agree. You see managers haven't the guts to stand up to them.

Emily: This is correct. The crowd that control Human Resources think they own V/Line. They want to put who they want in the job. This is why morale is low. An existing employee at this depot could have done this job and the sacked conductor could have stayed on the trains.

Ezra: I went to the conductor supervisor for the region and expressed my disgust to him over this conductor's dismissal.

RW: What was his reply?

Ezra: He said she was a troublemaker and was not part of the team and her dismissal was justified.

Emily: You see he was worried about his future as his position of On-Train Supervisor was being reviewed. In the review he kept his position when the position he was in was not advertised.

RW: Yes, I have been told what happened with these Supervisor positions. This was a depot which was not advertised as having a vacancy, but that is another story. What was the aftermath?

Emily & Ezra: The conductor challenged her dismissal in the arbitration court, in which she was defended by an organiser from the Union. As she was on probation, she lost the case. As for the Union Delegate at the depot, the Union called a meeting at the depot. As a result of this meeting, the delegate was removed and a new delegate was elected.

RW: In conclusion, this is a sad story. The dismissed conductor would have been a good union delegate, if she kept her job. I say the reason, she lost her job was because of a clash personalities. As for the union delegate who was to defend her, he was scared of his wife. He should have argued for her. As for management, they should have gone for a compromise, but they thought this conductor was a threat. Finally thank you Emily and Ezra for coming forward.

SPANISH LABOUR NEWS

Mon, 6 Jul 2009

Organizing Worker Struggles
Through Direct Democracy:

The Barcelona Bus Drivers Struggle for Two Days Off, 2007-2008

This is about a successful struggle of bus drivers on Barcelona's transit system between the fall of 2007 and March of 2008. Unlike the transit workers in Madrid, who had two days off each week, bus drivers in Barcelona were forced to work a six-day week. To gain a victory in their fight for two consecutive "rest days", the workers organized regular worker assemblies independent of the union bureaucracy and elected their own rank-and-file committee to coordinate the struggle.

read more:

<http://www.uncanny.net/~wetzl/barcelonabusstruggle.htm>

The struggle is also interesting in what it reveals about Spain's collective bargaining system. Under Spanish labour law since the late '70s, enterprises with more than 50 workers in a local area must allow workers to collectively bargain through a committee elected by the workers, the *comite de empresa*. I'll refer to these as "bargaining councils." Typically unions run slates of candidates and they elect a number of delegates in proportion to their vote. The bargaining councils are not required by law to adhere to a vote of workers in a contract ratification meeting. Although only 17 percent of Spain's workers belong to unions, unions collectively bargain for a vastly larger number of people through the bargaining council system. People are entitled to 40 hours off with pay per month when elected to the bargaining committee, and unions that can receive at least 10 percent of the vote throughout Spain receive additional perks. At present the only union federations that receive more than 10 percent of the vote throughout Spain are the General Union of Workers (UGT), a union aligned with the PSOE, Spain's governing social-democratic party, and the Workers Commissions, a union influenced by the Communist Party. Delegates and unions receive subsidies from employers and the

government through this system. This makes them independent to some extent of workers supporting their work through union dues.

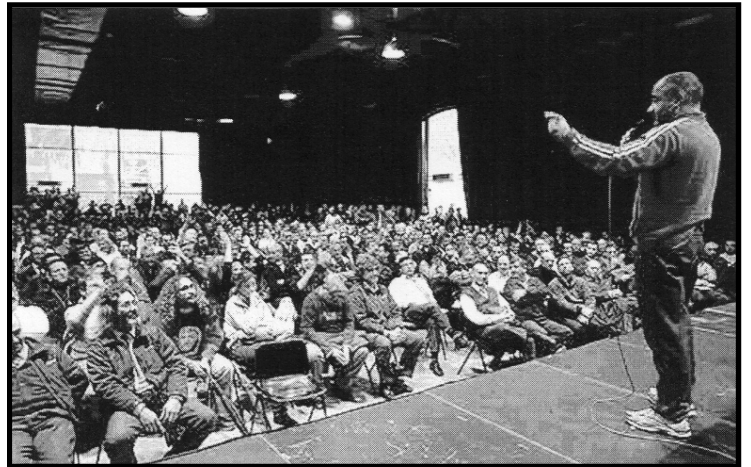
At the Barcelona TMB (Urban Transit Authority), there are separate bargaining councils for the 2,800 bus system workers and the 2,500 subway system workers. There are currently five unions on the bus system bargaining council. At the time of the December 2005 contract negotiation, there was a large meeting of drivers who voted NO on the proposed 3-year contract because it did not guarantee two days off per week. However, three unions with a very narrow majority of the 27 delegates on the bargaining council voted to ratify the contract despite worker opposition. Those unions are the UGT, Workers Commissions, and Independent Workers Union (SIT). Thus the delegates of these three unions

signed the contract behind the backs of the workers. The largest union of the bus drivers is the Transport and Communications Industrial Union of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT). Although the CGT voted "No" on the contract, it did not have an absolute majority of the delegates and was unable to block it. The fifth union on the bargaining council is an independent, the Association of Urban Transport Drivers of Barcelona (ACTUB). The CGT transport union is also the largest union of workers on the Barcelona subway system.

A similar problem of the bargaining council voting against workers' wishes happened in the contract struggle on the Barcelona subway system in 2003. In that case, TMB management had been demanding a concessionary contract. Like French transportation workers, the Barcelona subway workers were entitled to earlier retirement than other Spanish workers under their contract. Management wanted to lengthen required length of service to the average in Spain. As in the current bus system struggle, subway workers conducted a series of brief strikes. The CGT union on the subway collected signatures from 1,200 workers demanding an assembly to ratify any proposed contract. But the

Workers Commissions held a poorly advertised meeting one night with only 60 people present. Since this meeting approved the contract, the Workers Commissions, UGT and two pro-company independent unions voted to approve the contract. Although the CGT are the largest union on the subway system, they are not an absolute majority on the bargaining council and could thus not block the concessionary contract.

The CGT describes itself as a "revolutionary, libertarian" union. The CGT advocates what would be called "social movement unionism" in the USA. The CGT in recent years has been receiving the votes of about a million workers — about 8 percent of the vote — in bargaining council elections in Spain. Thus the union is still too small to challenge the cur-



rent dominance in Spain of the UGT and Workers Commissions, which receive around 70 percent of the votes.

The current struggle on the Barcelona bus system began November 2007 when the CGT and ACTUB developed an alliance and agreement on how to proceed. On November 21st, a general assembly of bus drivers was held at one of the bus garages. The bus system was shut down for five hours so that this meeting could take place. At that assembly workers voted to approve the demand for two days off with no cut in pay and elected a Rest Days Committee (*comite de descansos*) (<http://comitedescansos.blogspot.com/>) to conduct the struggle. The idea was for the workers to direct the struggle themselves through their general assembly, "independent of the trade unions." The UGT and Workers Commissions boycotted that meeting.

Assembly of drivers before first strike in December

The first two strikes were conducted around Christmas time and in early January. At the time of the December strike, 54

buses driven by scabs were attacked and tires were punctured or rear-view mirrors were broken or windshields splashed with paint. Bus kiosks throughout the city were spray painted with slogans supporting the bus strike. Meanwhile, the bus workers attempted to gain support from neighbourhood groups throughout the city, and stated their support for a group of squatters living on property owned by the TMB.

During the January strike, a group of regional government police (Mossos d'escuadra) began shouting insults at a group of drivers doing peaceful informational picketing, calling them "whore's sons", "subnormals", "pieces of shit." A member of the CGT was assaulted by these cops and then arrested and charged with assaulting the officer. The workers' lawyer described the behaviour of the police as "a return to the era of Francoism." In addition, the management of TMB gave suspensions to 25 workers. The longest suspension, six months, was given to Saturnino Mercader, the CGT president of the bargaining council. Again in February during a drivers' march, another member of the CGT was struck in the head by police. The drivers have now made an end to "police and labour repression" another demand of the strike. The participation of 1,800 drivers in a march and mass meeting at Placa Universitat, shows majority support for the strike among the drivers.

At a general assembly on Feb. 12th, about 60 members of the UGT and Workers Commissions attended, and the UGT and Workers Commissions pledged to respect the decision of the drivers. At that assembly the drivers voted to continue with another strike March 3 to March 6. Meanwhile, the SIT, which the CGT describes as a "corporatist" (pro-company) union, was the only union to agree to management's proposal to wait for the next contract negotiations.

The management response to this struggle waffled. At first they said the drivers were already getting two days off. Then they backtracked on that, admitting this was not the case. More recently the head manager of TMB said the workers average only 7 hours 4 minutes per day. But the workers say this is a "lie". They claim that the great majority of drivers work more than seven and a half hours per day.

In March 2008, the management of TMB and local politicians have stated that they could not grant two days off with no loss in pay without either cutting service or rais-

ing fares. In response, the drivers' spokespeople point out that workers on the Madrid bus system have two days off and the fare is lower than in Barcelona. The workers point to the large number of very highly paid people at the top at TMB, the hugely generous pensions that managers get, and the lavish public relations expenditures of TMB.

March to support the drivers' strike

In an interview on Barcelona TV, Assumpta Escarp, president of the TMB, and a Barcelona city councilwoman, declared that she'd be happy to negotiate a change in the driver's work week, but that it had to go through the "framework of the contract." But that would put the issue back in control of the same bargaining council who signed a contract workers rejected last time. Meanwhile, the head of the Workers Commissions in Catalonia came out against the strike. According to



Saturnino Mercader, the bargaining council president (a member of CGT), the UGT and Workers Commissions "now count for nothing" in this struggle. "The [drivers'] assembly has swept them aside."

On the Wednesday before the last day of the strike, the independent assembly held a meeting, with about 800 workers present, at the headquarters of the CGT. They voted to continue to strike on Thursdays.

The next day the head bureaucrat of the UGT in Catalonia, Josep Maria Alvarez, and the head bureaucrat of the Workers Commissions in Catalonia, Joan Cosubiela, issued a joint statement of their intention to ask the TMB management to negotiate a solution to the struggle through the official bargaining council, "with or without the strikers." In other words, the heads of the UGT and Workers Commission were stating their intention to

ignore and bypass the independent assembly and Rest Days Committee. The UGT thus went back on the pledge they made in February to respect the decision of the drivers' assembly.

Meanwhile, the bureaucrats of the TMB and city political leaders stated their unwillingness to negotiate with the independent assembly and Rest Days Committee, and their intent also to negotiate only through contract negotiations via the official bargaining council. It's clear why the UGT and Workers Commissions bureaucracy favoured the official bargaining council. At that time, the UGT and Workers Commission control a narrow majority of 14 to 13 on the official bargaining council. This gives them the legal power to impose a solution without any ratification vote of the drivers' assembly. This path also clearly had the support of the Socialist Party political leaders who control the city government.

After their strike in March, the independent assembly of drivers voted to reject management's last proposal, criticized their "dictatorial style of negotiation" and decided on an indefinite strike of the bus system for April 15th. The Rest Days Committee posted on its blog a letter of support signed by a long list of members, local officials, shop committee members of the UGT and Workers Commissions. This put these signers at odds with the leadership of the UGT and Workers Commissions in Catalonia.

Facing national and regional elections and with growing popular sympathy for the drivers, the Socialist Party politicians finally capitulated. They agreed that the workers would receive the two consecutive days off but asked that its implementation be

postponed to the new labour contract at the end of 2008. Thus all the hard work of the CGT members and other bus workers has paid off. After the victory, the Rest Days Committee put on a cultural festival for the people of Barcelona to thank them for their support. Not too many weeks later, elections took place for the official bargaining council. In the new elections, the CGT/ACTUB alliance gained a narrow one-vote majority, due to the defection of some members of the independent SIT.

source:

<http://www.uncanny.net/~wetzal/>

BRITAIN TODAY

VESTAS OCCUPIED

When Danish wind turbine company Vestas decided to stop operations at its two factories on the Isle of Wight, workers decided to occupy. In turn there was massive support from all over the country. Supporters included anarchists, left-wing parties, greens & climate



change activists in what the press have billed as the ideal Red & Green coalition.

Police and security initially attempted to impede the occupations by preventing food getting in from outside. On a national day of action on Wednesday 12th August, the official day of closure, there were local demonstrations in dozens of towns. Much of the support rests on the massive injustice that hundreds of people can suddenly be made redundant at time when the government is supposedly supporting the growth of renewable energy, the banks have been bailed out for billions of pounds, and it is not like the workers are going to walk into other jobs in the economic crisis. The company is making out that the UK onshore market is being impeded by local councils who are denying planning permission for wind power installations under pressure from 'not in my back yard' rural revolvers. This is just play-

ing with the media. Like any multinational company, Vestas have got their eyes on their global profit and are prepared to move to wherever the manufacturing is more convenient. The story has been the same in many other tech industries where companies have in some cases moved their entire manufacturing operations across the world at will, whether it is to open new markets, access cheaper labour or tax breaks, or to downsize in a recession.

Much of the market for Vestas turbine blades made on the Isle of Wight was in the US anyway - shipping them was not really a problem before, so why now? It's a cheap trick to blame local NIMBYism and so divert press from a corporate economic decision to party politics, knowing that the local Tory MP had previously opposed wind power planning permission on the Island. David Milliband is more than happy to blame the problem on Conservative councils and so help dent the opposition's invented green credentials, as he has already done on several occasions. As usual the Left is talking up nationalisation and selling their papers on demos. Same old, same old - but come

on, the idea that the government would nationalise a foreign manufacturer, never mind a British owned one, is nonsense. The Left parties might as well call for renationalisation of the whole of the power industry and while they are at it demand socialist nuclear power as well. The government was never going to intervene to prop up a company that no longer wants to manufacture in the UK - so why not just be honest about that? In short, the workers were never really in a good position to save their jobs, and since the 425 redundancies were announced on August 12th, only a small number will now remain in

work temporarily to close the factory or redeploy to Vestas' R&D department on the Island. But taking that huge loss aside the support has been inspirational and response by passersby during demonstrations has been positive. Protests

continued at Vestas HQ in Warrington. There was also a sit-in at an Isle of Wight job centre demanding the government take action on its pledge to create 1.5 million green jobs. This all shows that people are not being taken in by our leaders' green wash and that across Britain solidarity is on the up against redundancies. You only have to go on to the Save Vestas website to see the number of actions that have taken place. The AF has been involved in some of these and many anarchists have been down to the Isle of Wight where the roof of the factory in Cowes was occupied for over a week. Meanwhile, taking action to the doors of Job Centres is a good way to highlight the real level of unemployment that we are currently experiencing which is more than 20%. Long may site and factory occupations continue!
<http://savevestas.wordpress.com>

Royal Mail Strikes

Workers at the Royal Mail have taken further strike action over the company's 'modernisation' plans, which are seen as an attack on jobs and conditions. Of the 160,000 workers organised by the Communication Workers' Union, 130,000 are to be affected by strike action. This round of action will be followed by a planned ballot in September for company-wide strikes over job reductions. The union is claiming that cutbacks in jobs at the company will affect services, and that Royal Mail's 'modernisation' plans do not take into account increased internet shopping and package deliveries.

Airport Workers' Strike

I imagine all the people ... on strike 150 baggage handlers at Liverpool John Lennon Airport have started indefinite strike action over plans to sack 23 workers. The GMB union balloted the workers, who are mounting pickets outside the airport. Employer Servisair has drafted in extra staff for strike-breaking duty. Meanwhile baggage handlers, aircraft refuellers and terminal cleaners who are members of the Unite union at Manchester Airport have voted 'overwhelmingly' for strike action over pay. Workers employed by Rentokil/Initial and ASIG are to strike

over a miserly 0% pay offer while staff employed by Swissport are walking out over the company refusing to honour a pay deal brokered last year.

Fire service disputes heat up

Fire fighters in Merseyside are threatening strike action over the sacking of a union official. Fire Brigades Union official Kevin Hughes was fired over a alleged assault on the son of a strike breaker. However, police investigations found no

evidence with which to proceed, and Kevin had a number of witnesses, including independent witnesses, who vouched for his innocence.

According to FBU regional secretary Kevin Brown, "This is a clear case of victimisation of a union official brought before a fire authority's kangaroo court and found guilty. The police had already carried out a professional and intensive investigation and brought no charges. The fire authority brought a weak case before one of their own senior managers with no independent witnesses and no other evidence ... The overwhelming evidence was

in Kevin's favour but he has been sacked. Merseyside fire fighters are not going to sit back and watch a colleague victimised for representing them." Meanwhile the government is facing nationwide strikes by fire fighters in response to spending cuts. The cuts are following in the wake of the government's banking bailout and the increased budget deficit. Fire fighters have been angered further by the news that private contractors are being courted to cover future strikes. The armed forces, which covered prior strikes, are overstretched in Afghanistan.

Thanks to Resistance Bulletin

Debate on Australian Shop Stewards' Network

At the "See Through the Empire's New Clothes" Conference on 12-13th Sept in Redfern, Sydney, a workshop was held on a proposal to set up a Union Delegates Network. It was attended by 20 or so. It particularly focused on such a network being composed of union reps from the existing bureaucratic unions which are affiliated to the ACTU, but would be also open to reps from other organisations and would play an important role in the fightback against the employer offensive via helping coordinate solidarity action.

The session began with presentations from 3 speakers. One gave a brief talk about the early shop stewards movement in the UK during WWI. Bizarrely a sort of role play was then initiated where some meeting attendees imagined they were shop stewards from this movement and they in turn confronted attendees repre-

sending contemporary union reps. A much more detailed discussion of the trajectory of the British Shop Stewards would have been more helpful.

Another speaker from the NSW Public Service Association Progressives gave an interesting talk about the neo liberal offensive and the role of the ALP controlled union bureaucracies in assisting it and some positive grass roots syndicalist developments to counter it.

Another speaker, spoke about this grandios scheme originating at an ASF (Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation) conference early in the year. She admitted the discussion had a very utopian aspect. It lasted 7 hours! It seems when the scheme was taken out of the hot house of the conference, the wild enthusiasm of many they were expecting such as in Sydney has not eventuated. The ASF has been known in

the past for its enthusiasm for "papier mache" and even "internet" syndicalist unions and seeing itself as a union, with much lascivious massaging of its micro bureaucracy. So this proposal is certainly a new tack. However, as pointed out by an ASN militant without serious long range strategic organising and a climate of raised morale amongst actual workers, its likely the proposal will just lead to another micro bureaucracy and talk shop. A recruiting ground for leftist sects, where no doubt all manner of motions will be passed and political correctness displays will occur. However, due to low morale on the job, solidarity direct action will not be forth coming. In a period of raised workers' morale, the network idea would be more realistic. In the case of the British Shop Stewards Movement after WWI, in a period of employer offensive, it also became a micro bureaucracy dropping ultra democratic features and being absorbed by the macro bureaucracy of the early Communist Party as the Militant Minority Movement. Ed.

Sydney bus drivers defy union and take wildcat action

130 bus drivers walked out at the Busways Blacktown depot at 3.30 a.m. on August 25 against the imposition of new timetables that would impose shorter times for routes.

Drivers said that the timetables would be impossible to meet, which would not only inconvenience and anger passengers, and add to Sydney's public transport shambles, but cut short the drivers' break periods. The workers said they would be under enormous pressure to drive over the speed limit.

Angered by the lack of support from the Transport Workers Union (TWU), the drivers conducted their own stoppage,



giving no warning to the union or management. The TWU opposed the strike and intervened to end it as quickly as possible, and has worked to isolate the Blacktown depot drivers, from the workers at other depots.

The strike produced furious denunciations in the media and from the Industrial Relations Commission. This betrays consider-

able nervousness that the drivers' example could encourage other workers to defy the trade unions and take independent action to defend their jobs and conditions.

Like employers across the board, Busways, a large private operator, is utilising the economic crisis, with the backing of the state government, to demand a productivity speed-up on top of years of attacks on conditions. By contrast, the Rowe family, which owns the Busways Group, is thought to be one of the wealthiest in Australia.

Although the Busways management has now agreed to further talks on the proposed timetables, and despite a no-strike order, drivers said they would strike again unless the company dropped its demands.

Thanks to Mutiny/Libcom

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Approach to Counter the Intensified Employer Offensive & Economic Crisis

Firstly in this article I want to briefly outline aspects of anarcho-syndicalism and the ASN approach toward it in the contemporary Australian context. I'll then move onto a discussion of our views on how to counter the current accelerated employer offensive.

Anarcho-syndicalism is about spreading anarchist ideas of organisation and industrial unionism within the labour movement. Such ideas include federalism – unions as voluntary associations without full time officials invested with executive powers – decision making on the basis of workers' assemblies and the strict mandating and instant recall of delegates for coordinating decision making. In this framework, the taking of direct action – forms of action controlled by workers such as strikes, work to rule, sabotage, occupations and work-ins and outside the control of any union hierarchy, industrial courts or political parties. Industrial unionism involves uniting all workers in the same industry in the same union. Union Halls would become centres for workers self education, discussion and lectures. Associated with all this would be the emergence of a syndicalist mass media – newspapers, radio and television stations to counter the bourgeois media and anti militarist organising to organise the workers in uniform in the armed services and the creation of workers' militias. The overall effect of this activity and institutions is to prepare workers for taking over the running of industry and ejecting the bosses. On the community level, the raised morale associated with waves of direct action launched by this syndicalist industrial movement and the support of syndicalist unions would see the emergence in working class areas – of community associations which would focus on such issues as combating high rents via organising rent strikes and combating unwanted developments via seeking the support of the syndicalist building union to impose green bans. Similar to the famous green bans of the NSW BLF (Builders Labourers Federation) of the late 1960's and early 1970's.

In a revolutionary situation associated with the overthrow of the capitalist setup, on the basis of ultra democratic processes

workers councils and regular assemblies on the job would decide how are things are produced. Whilst community councils and associated neighbour assemblies would decide what is to be produced.

"Smoke & Mirrors" & The Rightwing ALP Machine

Existing Australian unions are radically different of course. They are highly bureaucratic with whole layers of full time officials both elected and not elected, closely connected to different factions of the ALP. They help fund the ALP via donations, preventing outbreaks of industrial action in league with the mainstream media, the bosses and the ALP and Liberal Govt's in power.

They are playing a very important role in the employer offensive via facilitating en-

outlaws most effective industrial action. Some interesting examples of this nefarious technique has occurred in recent years. One example is various EBA's sold by the Rail Tram & Bus Union (RTBU) hierarchy in State Transit in NSW in recent years. Whereby there is a clause which allows management to change bus drivers' shifts on a highly discriminatory basis. So workers are given the illusion that they have received a 4%pa pay rise. However due to this clause they can lose up to several hundred dollars a pay due to cuts to their shift lengths. (2) Most notoriously, in Rail Corp, the RTBU officials conned workers in 2008 into approving an EBA which okayed major job losses on the basis of the duplicity that they had won some victory in the lead up to the Pope's Visit and World Youth Day due to a threatened strike and there would be no trade off's associated with the EBA. (3)



AnarchoSyndicalism & Leftist Vanguard Sect Building

The heritage of bureaucratic unionism in Australia going back well over 100 years makes anarcho-syndicalist unionism very much an abstract phenomena. Today some drawn to the anarcho-syndicalist label, being very young, lacking in experience of the class struggle, often students or academics, have a very simplistic concept of anarcho-syndicalism. They see their tiny group as the nucleus of mass syndicalist unions and are often influenced by the unsavoury ways of the Trotskyist/Stalinist legacies. They get drawn into formalism and inward looking attitudes. Lavishing much attention on their own micro bureaucracies and the macro bureaucracy of the IWA(International Workers Association) which internationally links up such sectlets and in some countries such as Spain, small syndicalist union movements. Other groupings within this spectrum are not completely lost in these "formalist" charades, and are more outward looking but are lost in aimless, opportunistic activism and "tail ending" whatever workers' struggles arise and like the sects from the Trotskyist/Stalinist traditions are usually unsuccessful in recruiting workers to their groups through this

terprise bargaining and the use of their machines consisting of union reps and full time officials to conduct "smoke and mirrors" performances. Whereby workers are given the illusion, that they will gain wage rises without losses in conditions/job losses. However, particularly via obscure clauses in the EBA documents, they are obliged to agree to various wages and conditions reductions. Facilitating such subterfuge, the union officials refuse to call mass meetings where adequate debate can occur regarding the enterprise agreement to expose nasties. Various techniques are deployed by the officials to lower workers' expectations such as leaflets with highly slanted questions to encourage support for trade off's in the EBA. (1) Buttressing the enterprise bargaining "shell game", are the highly repressive Liberals' "Work Choices" and now Rudd's IR legislation which outlaws the approval of EBA via mass meetings and

whirlwind of opportunistic activity. Both types of sectlets are heavily influenced by the bogus divisive identity politics and develop positions on various issues fashionable in the leftist subculture for recruitment purposes.

Independent/Breakaway Unionism in Australia

The ASN orientation is to take a realistic approach to the question of building mass syndicalist unions in Australia. Recognising the need for precision long range activity involving the focusing of limited resources and personnel. We realise that militant workers unconnected to any left-sect will build mass syndicalist unions and the transitional steps leading to their emergence. We consider also that certain industries are of more strategic importance in regard to the level of class struggle and the employer offensive. Associated with moves to establish mass syndicalist unionism would be a climate of raised morale amongst workers and heightened levels of class struggle. Without such a climate of militancy, new independent unions are stymied in their growth such as the Shearers & Rural Workers Union, a split from the AWU-FIMEE (notorious rightwing ALP controlled rural, mining and manufacturing union and key bulwark of the Rightwing ALP faction) which emerged some years ago. It failed to expand due to the hostility of the other union hierarchies such as in the case of the defeat of its organising effort amongst wool scourers at E.P. Robinson in mid 1996.(4) In the case of the NSW Taxi industry, the ASN helped the emergence of a split from the TWU (Transport Workers Union, another rightwing ALP controlled union) some years ago which became the Taxi Drivers Employees Association. Initially, it had a militant orientation, with its launching of a protest blockade outside NSW Parliament House. However, following the establishment of an executive committee, it rapidly degenerated into a lobby group, similar to the TWU. However, lacking Rightwing ALP/Industrial Relations Club connections, and the TWU already possessing this "franchise" it was denied the right to negotiate enterprise agreements with employers. Whilst some key figures in its micro bureaucracy were attracted to close financially lucrative relations with a key new force in the taxi industry, until they were expelled. (5)

The major focus of ASN activity has been in Transport. Currently in regard to State Transit Authority Buses in NSW and NSW Railways, V-Line in Victorian Railways, and Maritime Transport in NSW. Apart from assisting existing militant worker networks as in the NSW Railways,

we have also helped to establish such networks and facilitated their activism such as Kickstart in State Transit in 2002, which was the first such organised opposition movement in State Transit for over 20 years. We have also helped build subsequent networks in this sector. The other key thrust of our work has been associated with assisting militant activity to counter the employer offensive.

For anarcho-syndicalist style organisations to form in industry, its vital that the tempo of the employer offensive is slowed down. Traditionally in Australia, Govts at various levels have played a key role particularly in regard to the public sector in taking initiatives to accelerate the employer offensive. Spurring on private sector employers to carry out efficiency drives – cut staff, introduce new waves of speedups, cut wages, restructure work forces and introduce new technologies to deskill and cut out jobs.

In the depression of the 1930's, the Govt played a key role in the introduction of 10% wages cuts. These cuts were initially introduced in Govt industry in the case of the railways. Initially in the NSW Railways where workers' militancy had been weakened due to the fallout of the defeat of the 1917 Great Strike and then generalised throughout the railways in other states. Subsequently, private and other Govt employers were encouraged to push successful for the Arbitration Court to generalise the pay cuts throughout industry. The subsequent Premiers' Plan savagely cut public service staffing and Govt expenditure and social welfare. Spurring on private sector employers to follow suit. (6)

Today a most important prong of the employer offensive in which the Govt and the union hierarchy are involved in facilitating is privatisation. The ASN over the years has been playing a significant role in association with militant workers in various campaigns in the NSW Railways to counter it.

Privatisation & The Contemporary Employer Offensive

One important dimension privatisation moves have taken is the restructuring of the City Rail Station network for the formation/selloff as franchises. Involving creating groupings of profit making stations with staff based on the largest station in the group and during the day working at the smaller stations. This restructuring will involve new waves of speedups and staff cuts. In 1999 in the lead up to the Olympics, rail bosses in league with the union hierarchy tried to get something like this introduced, called Customer Service Management. At a key mass meeting held at the Sydney Trades Hall, stemming from

a petition for a general RTBU meeting of station staff launched by militants. At the meeting, union endorsement of CSM was defeated. To head off a grass roots controlled campaign to fight CSM initiated by the meeting, the union hierarchy arbitrarily took over the campaign and called a lightning state wide rail strike next day with the complicity of railways management. The ASN played an important role in the success of the militants at this meeting through over the years assisting the exposure of the treacherous role of union officials to the grass roots. The next day the officials called a mass meeting at Parramatta, which was difficult for most workers to attend and was in an area where the officials still had some influence, to consider the future direction of the fight over CSM. At the meeting the officials were able to maintain control of the campaign by a narrow margin at the meeting and defeat a motion to disaffiliate the union from the ALP. (7)

Despite the officials stymieing of a grass roots controlled campaign and subverting the fight into a means to alienate commuter support for industrial action by workers during the Olympics via calling the snap strike and not bothering to educate commuters about the issues, key components of CSM were defeated. The big rail strike formed the crest of a small public sector strike wave. At the time there was also industrial action by council workers and nurses involving grass roots initiative and union officials complicity. The officials used it to put pressure on the Rightwing ALP controlled NSW Govt. via an ALP conference which was held on the weekend of the week of the public sector strike wave to gain more influence and a consultative role. Since the defeat of CSM, the rail bosses with the support of the union hierarchy, proceeded to impose 12 hour shifts on workers via a new enterprise agreement. Whilst being presented as a temporary measure for the Olympics, it's become permanent. It has contributed greatly to disorganising militants through exhausting them and making outside the job meetings difficult. (8)

Had the restructuring for privatisation in the railways been successful, its highly likely that the Govt would have moved more rapidly with privatisation moves in regard to STA buses, the Ferries. Associated with such an agenda was the introduction of the T-Card, the public transport smart card. It was to play an absolutely critical role as with the carving up of public transport into numerous franchises, an interchangeable ticketing system was required. It will also play a key role in the neo liberal "Strong State". As it contains enormous information and would be linked up with new digital cameras on buses and trains and the ID Card that

Howard was proposing at the end of his Govt's term in office. According to a source in RailCorp ticketing section, this defeat of privatisation measures put off the introduction of the T-Card.

The effect of a successful public transport privatisation surge at this time would in turn fast track privatisation in other Govt utilities and spur on private sector employers to downsize workforces, impose speedups, introduce new labour saving technology. The advent of privatisation would create more difficult terrain for militants to organise. Fear would be increased, there would be more exhaustion from new waves of speedups and lengthening of the working day, etc.

In 2007 a renewed push was made by the NSW Govt to introduce this restructuring for privatisation via a functional agreement avoiding involvement of the union hierarchy. Following some hard hitting criticism by militants assisted by the ASN, the union officials launched a campaign with the support of some militants and the Greens to oppose the functional agreement and enlighten commuters concerning its impact involving likely major staff cuts at stations. Subsequently the functional agreement was defeated in a ballot.

In recent months, RailCorp has proceeded with a savage staffing review at CityRail stations, using the argument that workers endorsed the 2008 enterprise agreement, which provided 4% pa wage rises of which 1½% was a trade off for job losses, they had agreed to the staff cuts due to a clever "smoke and mirrors" performance by the union hierarchy prior to World Youth Day. This restructuring is part of a much more ambitious privatisation push. As RailCorp is also moving to phase out train crews via DOO (Driver Only Operation) of trains and then eliminating the driver by operating trains from super control boxes. With the introduction of the T-Card, booking clerk and barrier jobs would be decimated. As in the case of 1999, all these measures would accelerate the employer offensive in both the public and private sectors. Together with moves to establish a strong state, such as more aggressive policing in the wake of the APEC protests and Anti-Terrorism laws.

So over the years we have been trying to counter the employer offensive by at least slowing it down, which has been done particularly via assisting militants self activity and networking in harsh conditions.

An important objective of our work is to help militants get big actions going to counter the privatisation moves, raise workers' morale generally and defy the new Rudd Industrial Relations legislation and break out of enterprise bargaining.

Those in the transport sector are potentially well sited due to their industrial muscle for launching such a worker counter offensive.

Syndicalism & Union Reform Movements

In regard to how all this relates to building mass syndicalist unions, it's basically up to militant workers on the job to determine the form transitional steps will take leading to the emergence of this alternative unionism. One likely approach is via union reform movements which create more favourable terrain for militant activity. An obvious example and the closest we have had to a mass syndicalist union is the NSW BLF in the 1960's and early 1970's. During this period militants who held leadership positions and activists on the job achieved major reforms in the union so that the executive rubber stamped grass roots decision making at mass meetings, limited officials' tenure of office, etc. The union also became drawn into a syndicalist trajectory entailing various forms of direct action such as work-ins, large scale sabotage and the famous "Green Bans". (9)

Associated with this "union reform" approach, the ASN has been very energetic in recent years particularly in public transport in assisting militants' election campaigns. It has occurred on various levels which has recently met some success and has involved using these campaigns and associated literature and agitation to get syndicalist ideas around on the job. A contemporary example of such a union reform movement is one which has developed in the NSW Fire Brigade Union and has been assisted by the ASN, particularly in regard to its workplace paper. Several years ago this movement won control of leadership positions in the union and moved to revive delegate networks which had been in decline and helped carry out some major spectacular direct action in the shape of a blockade protest in Sydney by fire trucks in early June 2008 which was largely blacked out by the main stream media. Unfortunately, despite some brilliant counter intelligence work by the ASN, the Rightwing ALP faction in the union which is likely to be connected with a network of undercover cops and a layer of ex-cops were recently able to regain influence in the union via infiltration, a coup and all manner of dirty work. Latest news, is that militants are far from demoralised and are fighting back to regain influence. Whilst the ASN is showing its fighting fit in this arena. (10)

Another associated way mass anarcho-syndicalist unionism could form assisted by strategic organising favoured

by the ASN, is that big actions carried out by transport workers would raise workers morale generally and defy Rudd repressive IR laws and break out of enterprise bargaining. Whilst with the solidarity of those workers in these more strategic sectors such as at busy times e.g. truckies banning deliveries and blockades at workplaces at say Xmas time, new syndicalist unions would be assisted in winning recognition by management and demands in various workplaces e.g. at Department Stores, Govt. Departments and so wiping out the base of tame cat bureaucratic unions and the ALP factions. So an expanding dynamic mass syndicalist union movement would arise.

The emergence of such powerful syndicalist movements in Australia and elsewhere would create the possibility of internationally coordinated direct action by workers to combat multinational companies and Governments. Consequently a genuine internationally organised syndicalist mass union movement could arise. Similar to the International Workers Association when it emerged after WWI, in sharp contrast to what it is today.

In conclusion, as shown in this article, it is possible for syndicalist groups to assist militants in efforts which can result in the slowing down of the employer offensive. The creation of more grass roots friendly union leaderships is also important in facilitating this activity and creating the basis for transitional steps leading to the emergence of mass syndicalist unionism and turning the tide decisively in the class struggle.

Mark

Notes

- (1) See *Rail Workers Discuss RailCorp EBA issues RW Vol.26 No.3(197)Oct-Nov 2007*
- (2) See *NSW State Transit Newsflash RW Vol.26 No.3(197) Oct-Nov.2007*
- (3) *NSW Railways News RW Vo.28 No.2(203) June-July 2009*
- (4) See *GLW 22/4/96 228#*
- (5) See *Discussions on NSW TDA forum list & Discussion with Taxi activists.*
- (6) See *Trade Unions & The Depression by L.J.Louis Page 70.*
- (7) See *NSW Railway News in RW Vol.18 No.4 (161) Oct-Nov 1999.*
- (8) See *Strike Upsurge in NSW in RW Vol.18 No.4 (161) Oct-Nov 1999.*
- (9) See *Green Bans Red Union by Verity and Merideth Burgmann*
- (10) See *Report of Protest in the Age 4/6/08 and discussion with firey activist*

The Bulgarian Anarchist Movement

By Jack Grancharoff

To write a historical outline of the Bulgarian anarchist movement is not an easy task since many important events are of a Dionysian character, submerged into the id of the collective consciousness and difficult to reconstruct. Nonetheless I will try, within my possibilities, to give some historical outline.

Bulgarian anarchism had its roots in the long established traditions of communality and the practice of mutual aid in Bulgaria. But it came to the forefront in the struggle, by Bulgarians in the 19th century, to free themselves from Turkish control and it coincided with the struggle of the oppressed against subjugation. Its intellectual formulation was a combination of indigenous rebellion and the circulation of Narodnik literature through which percolated the ideas of Bakunin.

The precursor of anarchism in Bulgaria was Christo Botev, an exile, outcast, poet, a fighter and, finally, a martyr for the cause of liberation. He and some other revolutionaries while exiled in Rumania had some contacts with Nitchaeff, at the time an emissary of Bakunin. I will let the poet present himself with his own words: "...heavy shackles rusted by blood and tears, shackles to which are nailed hands, legs, minds and wills and moans of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, grand fathers and sons. The way out of this oppressive and abominable situation is not to forge new fetters and new tyrannies, but the peoples' revolution and radical changes. Are not the seeds and germs of these changes visible in decentralized communities, in tradesmen's, men's, women's and children's associations?" (Duma (Word), year 1, No 1, June 10th 1871.)

"The school and only the school writes (newspaper) "Macedonia" will save Europe from a social coup d'etat. We emphasize the school and ally the school will prepare it for this coup d' etas, but not the school of Zlatousta, of Loyola or Wilhem and Napoleon but that of Fourier. Proudhon, Kuvier and Newton and the school of life," Duma, year 1, No 2, June 25th, 1871.)

"Only the sensible and fraternal unity among people will eliminate suffering, poverty and social parasitism and only this unity will be able to install real freedom, fraternity, equality and happiness in the world. As long as people remain divided

by the machinations of all sorts of empires, constitutions or republics, as long as they grovel to the divinely anointed, as long as they look at each other as enemies there never will be happiness on this earth and humanity be at rest.

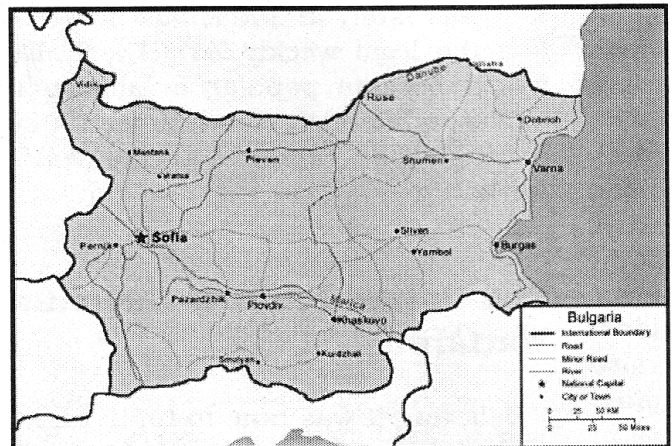
In any country the ruling and the privileged classes will continue to torture and oppress the poor, to keep them in ignorance and live on their labour... and we are right to assert, together with Proudhon, that every government is a plot and conspiracy against the freedom of humanity." (Zname (Standard) year 1, No 14, May 2, 1875.)

The above few examples of Botev's ideas indicate the penetration of anarchist ideas into the national liberation movement. Ideas which were cryptically expressed by the apostle of the liberation, Levsky, when he replied, to people who asked him who would be chosen as a tsar after the liberation: "If you fight for a tsar you already have yourself a Sultan." Botev, Levsky and many others died in the struggle. After the liberation from the Turks in 1878, the wave of nationalism suffocated the idea of social emancipation and it was a setback for anarchism. It is a historical fact that the aftermath of national revolutionary liberations is accompanied by suppression of the social revolution. Bulgaria was not an exception.

Bulgaria was at the cross-roads of the interests of the Great Powers and thus its liberation was of short duration. At the Congress of Berlin, 1878 attended by Russia, Turkey, Austria, Britain, France, Italy and Germany the dismemberment of Bulgaria was agreed upon. The north of Bulgaria became "an autonomous and tributary Principality under the Suzerainty of his Imperial Majesty the Sultan." and was to have "a Christian Government and a national militia." (4: p.430) Southern Bulgaria became a Turkish protectorate and Thrace and Macedonia were restored to direct Turkish rule. The union of north and south Bulgaria took place in 1885 and only then was Bulgaria released from direct Turkish control. The Balkans had be-

come a centre of the Great Powers' game of who was going to control the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. The Principality became an arena for German and Russian power plays and successive governments reflected this game. For example, in search of recognition by the Great Powers, Stefan Stambolov, Prime Minister from 1887 to 1894, appointed Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg as King of Bulgaria. The King became involved in politics for his own sake and had Stambolov assassinated in 1894. Stambolov's last words were: "People will forgive all my deeds but not the fact that I brought the King" The monarchy finally ended when, in the mid-1940s, the country voted to become a republic. Anyhow, back to anarchism

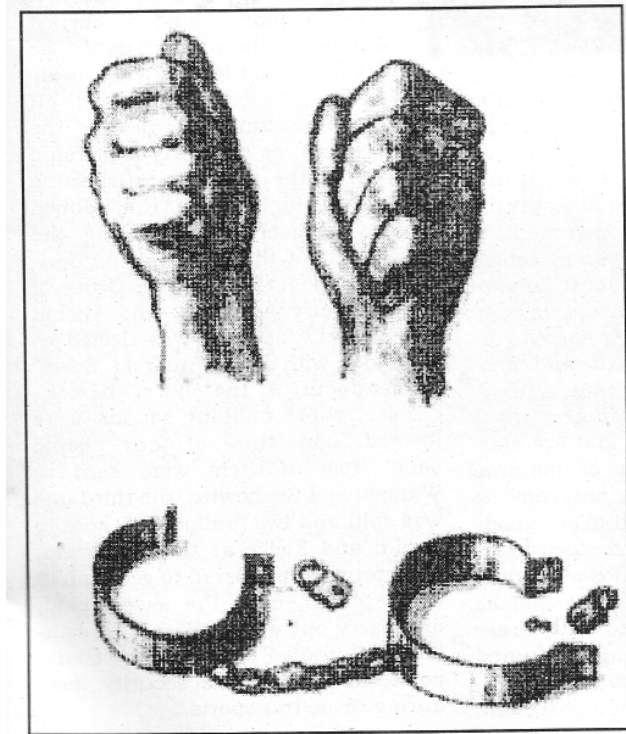
During the first decade of the liberation a cultural and literary anarchist current had found its way under the form of



siromachomilsivo, a movement established by Spiro Gulabcheff. Gulabcheff, as a teacher and a rebel, moved from town to town. This gave him a chance to establish groups everywhere he went. At the time anarchism and socialism were often interchangeable. To spread his ideas he first established a socialist and cooperative printing press named "Scoropechatnitsa". Brochures, pamphlets and books facilitated the spread of anarchism. Among his collaborators were some well known anarchists such as Vurban Kilifarsky, Nikola Stoyanoff, Paraskev Stoyanof etc. He also established the first anarchist group in Ruse in 1892. Other groups followed in Plovdiv, Pleven, Kuzanlik, Loin, Gabrovo, Razgrad etc. But these events had not remained unnoticed by the Government and even by the Marxists. According to Dimitr Blagoeff, the founder of the socialist party of Bulgaria: "The head [of Gulabcheff] was a mixture of Russian nihilism... Russian narodniks, Malorussian federalism and the Russian revolutionary conspiracy promoted to the extent of a Jesuit system in Bulgaria". (1: p.92) According to Blagoeff and his ilk socialism had remained pure

because it achieved scientific status while perfecting Jesuitism as a political art. As to the Government the procedure was to arrest anarchist activists, dismiss them from work, expel high school and university students and bring others to trial.

A great contribution to the spread of anarchism was coming from the Bulgarian student Geneva circle founded in 1897-8. They were excellent anarchists and revolutionaries but, carried by revolutionary fever, they wholeheartedly dedicated themselves to the national liberation struggle of Thrace and Macedonia with some of



them even playing a leading role, such as Mikhail Gerdjikoff. Much energy was wasted in this movement while the issue of anarchist organization within the country was ignored.

After the defeat of the Macedonian-Thracian uprising against the Turks in 1903 the anarchists realized the futility of national liberation struggles. They also realized that the struggle was undermined and manipulated by the Bulgarian monarchy for its own purposes. But by then the anarchists had lost many precious lives and much time. Nonetheless small groups continued to operate illegally.

The defeat of the Macedonian-Thracian venture made a lot of anarchists ponder about the creation of an anarchist organization. Anarchist activities in Bulgaria had also been gathering momentum due to the influx of Russian migrants as a result of the defeat of the 1905 Russian revolution. In 1906 appeared the first anarchist publications: "Anarchists" and "Svobodna Misl" (Free Thought). Consolidation of

European anarchism as a revolutionary movement also influenced the events in Bulgaria. An anarchist delegation was present at the congress in Amsterdam in 1907 and in the same year Gerdjikoff launched "Svobodno Obshchestvo" (Free Society). When Stambolyiski declared the Agrarian Union as a political party, Kilifarsky and Stoinov left it to concentrate on anarchism. They had decided to establish a publishing house under the named 'Bezvlastie' (Without Authority) and to put out a publication by the same name to replace the now banned

"Svobodno Obshchestvo". "Bezvlastie" continued to be published until 1910. (1: p.160) Other publishing houses sprang up, for example, in Burgas "Vazrajthane", in Ruce "Osvobodenie". "Bezvlastie" more than the others was based on revolutionary syndicalism. It appealed to the workers to organize themselves in a manner "completely independent of parties as a true proletarian and class organization on the principles of the revolutionary anarcho-syndicalism." (Bezvlastie, No 18, March 5th, 1910.)

Anarcho-syndicalism had found a response among workers disillusioned by the opportunism of the unions and of party politics. In 1910 a group of workers left the united socialist union and put out a brochure entitled "Workers awakening".

A similar group in Yambol formed a "revolutionary Syndicalist club" and called to the workers in name of the Social Revolution and Anarcho communism to join revolutionary syndicalism. Their call reverberated in many cities such as Burgas, Plovdiv, Sofia, Haskovo, Yambol, Sliven, Temovo, Kyustendil and others where anarchist groups were formed, as well as in many towns, villages and in high schools.

Anarchism spread quickly but organization was lacking. "Bezvlastie", in September 1909, appealed to all anarchist groups to call a congress in order to form a federation. This call was taken up by Sofia's group which urged the formation of a Macedonian-Bulgarian Anarchist federation. In 1912 the initiative was supported by Gerdjikoff in the newspaper edited by him, "Probuda" (Awakening). But the Balkan War and WW1 thwarted the intentions of the anarchists to create an organization.

The main anarchist newspapers were banned. Nevertheless, between the two Wars there were some anarchist activities. In Razgrad and Ruce publishing activities continued. In 1914 in Sofia appeared "Rabotnicheska Misl" (Workers' Thought) which took a principled anti-militarist position and was banned in 1915. Many anarchists, to escape military service, went underground. Some refused to carry arms and were goaled; others formed illegal antimilitarist groups to sabotage the War.

After the end of the War anarchism was re-activated. The old groups were rebuilding and new ones being created. The idea of organization was put forward again. In the spring of 1919 the ideological organization and the Anarcho-syndicalists had formed the secretariate which sent circulars to all groups regarding the convening of a congress. The Congress, opened by Mikhail Gerdjikoff, took place in Sofia, June 15, 16 and 17 of that year and was attended by 150 delegates (due to the military situation underground groups did not send delegates). The Congress agreed on the formation of FAKB (the Federation of Anarcho Communists of Bulgaria). It was also decided that each group or federation could have its own publishing house and newspaper. "Rabotnicheska Misl" was suspended and the task of a new newspaper was assigned to Gerdjikoff. A month after the Congress "Probuda" appeared as the organ of the Federation. Anarchism succeeded in becoming a popular movement and it penetrated many layers of society from workers, youth and students to teachers and public servants.

The underground illegal activities of the movement continued. The revolutionary fever on the eve of the transport strike at the end of 1919-20 was a propitious omen of revolutionary possibilities and the anarchist underground movement perceived this. They were not only interested in strengthening the movement, ethically and ideologically, but also in recruiting and arming people in preparation for the eventual attack coming from the ruling classes.

Unfortunately, the revolutionary possibilities never materialized because of the manipulation of the workers by the political parties, sadly most of whom were so-called "left". The strike was cruelly suppressed and the workers missed the great opportunity to rebel. The anarchist newspaper "Probuda" was banned but Sheitanoff clandestinely edited "The Revolt".

To be continued

NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news "behind the scenes" lately has been the savage staffing review of City Rail stations in Sydney and the despicable role of the ALP aligned union hierarchy in the sabotage and subversion of the grass roots campaign to fight the cut backs. These staff losses are very much part of an agenda for privatisation. The mainstream media has also largely blacked out the whole affair. (See article Page 3.)

Intriguingly, certain of the officials of the rail union have attended the notorious Harvard Union Officials Training Course. Attendance at these courses is becoming increasingly common amongst ambitious ALP union officials. (See article page 4.)

The ASN is currently assisting in our usual efficient manner the wheels of militant organisation in an upcoming important campaign in public transport. It will have major ramifications for the development of grass roots controlled militant unionism. Stay tuned for further developments on this front.

There was a conference on the topic of organising against the current economic crisis and the employer offensive held on the weekend 12th to 13th Sept in Redfern. Like many such events organised by Leftist groups it was marred by political correctness displays and infatuations with the bogus and divisive identity politics. Certain to alienate militant workers outside the leftist fringe. Despite these deficiencies there was an interesting discussion around a proposal to set up a union delegates network. (See article Page 13.)

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.

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

A.S.N. DIRECTORY

ASN Sydney Local

PO Box 92
Broadway 2007 NSW

ASN Melbourne:

J.Dixon
Jeremywinixon@yahoo.com.au

The Anarchist Age

PO Box 20
Parkville Vic. 3052

Newcastle Anarchist Group

PO Box 532
Newcastle 2300 NSW.

SPARKS

(Anarcho-Syndicalist Transport Paper)
PO Box 92 Broadway
2007 NSW
Web site: <http://www.sparksworld.org>

JURA BOOKS

440 Parramatta Rd
Petersham 2049 NSW
Ph. (02) 95509931

SPARX

**DIRECT ACTION
FIRE FIGHTERS PAPER**
Sparx@firehousemail.com

WORKING CLASS UNITED

[Http://workingclassunited.com/home](http://workingclassunited.com/home)

Grassland Infoshop

207B Nicholson St.
Footscray
3011 Vic.

Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name

Address

General Secretary

PO Box 532 Newcastle 2300 NSW.

REBEL WORKER WEB SITE:
www.rebelworker.org

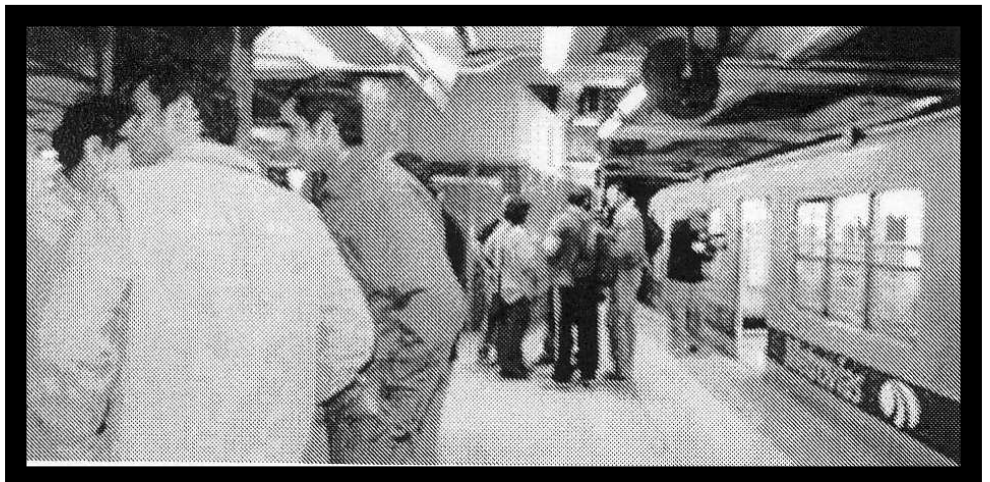
ARGENTINE SUBWAY WORKERS TAKE DIRECT ACTION

11/9/09 This week, employees on the Buenos Aires subway freed turnstiles for two hours in a move to press the government to grant legal status to their recently created trade union as well as taking strike action.

According to Argentine law only one union on each trade or activity can be granted legal status and therefore, participate in wage bargaining or legally call for a strike.

The spokesman of the workers, Néstor Segovia, said in a radio interview that the union "is demanding that the Labor Ministry grants legal status" to the subway workers union, whose workers last year voted in favour of creating a new union as a result of differences with the UTA transport workers union which now gathers all workers in the transport activity.

UTA claims the initiative would go against the law, as it goes against their interests. Nevertheless, a ruling of the Supreme Court last year paved the way for changes in the law in a move to democratize labor unions.



Another union representative, Roberto Pianelli, later in the week told the press that workers will also be taking strike action which will interrupt service on all subway lines from noon till 2pm, but said that workers wanted to "avoid" the strike and that they waited up to the last minute to call it off.

Pianelli said that if before noon they get a phone call to begin solving the problem of the legal recognition of a trade union of subway workers independent from the larger Transportation Workers Union (UTA) then they may reconsider. How-

ever, the delegate never received that call and the strike began at 12 pm sharp on all six lines of Buenos Aires city subway.

Company officials said the strike would affect 160,000 passengers.

Thanks to Libcom

IRAN - BUS UNION OFFICIAL IMPRISONED

For more than two years I have been telling you about Mansour Ossanlu, a leader of the bus workers' union in Tehran, who continues to sit in an Iranian prison.

His only crime was to engage in the same kind of non-violent, legitimate trade union activity that you and I do every day.

Since his arrest 26 months ago Ossanlu's health has deteriorated.

This is not just what we say. It's what the prison doctors say, which is why they have recommended he be given medical treatment outside of jail.

But the case judge says that he cannot be treated outside the prison.

Ossanlu's health continues to deteriorate and today Amnesty International is launching a large-scale global campaign to call for his fair treatment and release.

I urge everyone reading this message to do two things right now:

1. Go to http://amnesty.org.uk/actions_details.asp?ActionID=628 and send off your message.
2. Pass this email on to at least 10 friends and co-workers.

Thank you.

Eric Lee