

REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia
Vol.43 No.1 (239) May - June 2025

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

With the Federal Election Farce Over, Governments to show their Fangs with New 'Productivity Increase' Drive inspired by Big Business, the Shadow of the Trump Regime and Squandering of Billions of Tax Payers' Money on AUKUS Killer Nuke Subs! Organise Grass Roots Committees to Fight Back with Direct Action and New Grass Roots Controlled Unions!



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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

P.O. Box 92

BROADWAY 2007 NSW

E-mail: Via our web site

www.rebelworker.org

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AUSTRALIA: \$12 a year

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\$25 (Aus.) by Air

\$20 (Aus.) by Sea mail

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The Federal Election Circus

As this issue of RW goes to press, the Albanese ALP Federal Government has secured a big victory in the Federal Elections avoiding a 'Hung Parliament'. With Albanese leading the next government, the ruling class will celebrate. Both Labor and the Liberals are eager to see the CFMEU(Corporate union which which secured marginally better so called wage rises through EBA negotiations than other so called unions annoying the bosses and ALP godfathers) smashed by the system of administration. Both parties are complicit in the genocide of the Palestinians. Both have the blood of refugees, tortured in indefinite offshore detention, on their hands. Both support squandering of billions of tax payers' money on AUKUS killer nuke subs. In response, the Greens and Victorian Socialists argue for electing their candidates and building their parties. As anarcho-syndicalists we don't tell people how to vote (or not vote). What we oppose is

the strategy of electioneering, which is counter productive to building class power via major break aways from the 'Corporate Unions'. Occurring in the context of a major strike/direct action wave across industry and subsequent moves to establish a new grass roots controlled industrial unions confederation based on direct action and opposed to all political parties. Strategic industrial organising by anarcho-syndicalists and allied groups in such key sectors as the transport industries affecting the arteries of the corporate set up would play a crucial role in facilitating such a strike/direct action wave movement.

Put a Socialist in Parliament?

Anarcho-syndicalists reject electoral politics for the simple reason that it disempowers workers and doesn't get results. Over a century of parliamentary socialism worldwide tells the same story.

First, the platform of a socialist candidate will usually only be as radical as the political climate allows for itself dependent on the balance of class forces outside of parliament. Generally, socialist candidates won't campaign on socialist ideas at all, and so end up associating socialism with liberal politics. In the rare instance that they do advocate socialism, and assuming they manage to win, they quickly become absorbed in the work

of being a politician. They attend committee meetings, vote on legislation proposed by other parties, and make speeches few workers hear. Having started from the assumption that getting elected is important, they then naturally assume the importance of their own re-election. Inevitably, this increasingly becomes the focus of their work. The party becomes obsessed with protecting their vulnerable candidate. The answer to this weakness in parliament is always the same: elect even more socialists. Gradually, the time, energy, and resources of a socialist party moves away from building class power, and toward maintaining and extending the power of its elected officials. An army of activists is enlisted to secure votes and protect the candidates. With these activists in the lead, workers are taught to place their hopes in politicians, not take action for themselves.

Capital Calls the Shots

Even if a socialist party wins government, it still faces a capitalist-controlled economy within a global capitalist market. If a government does not serve capital's interests, the capitalists crack the whip that control of the economy gives them. A socialist government that tries to dictate change from above will quickly face disinvestment, capital flight, capitalist

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ASN APPEAL

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Network requires suitable cost effective permanent premises. A\$750,000 is urgently sought to buy premises for the proposed Rebel Worker-Anarcho-Syndicalist Network Media Centre. Please make out Cheques to Black Cat Media & send to P.O. Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW.

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

NSW RAIL EBA CIRCUS

The most important news in the NSW Railways remains the drawn out Combined Rail Unions EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) circus/campaign. There is a 'method in the madness' of Toby Warnes RTBU NSW Sec, delaying tactics. Associated with the role of the EBA and the 'ring masters' timing in the circus, to provide a new back door for

DOO (Driver Only Operation) on the NIF (New Intercity Fleet) and other new and re-furbished trains and privatisation pushes. Other factors contributing to the EBA circus timing would be the obvious need of the ALP Godfathers to have industrial peace to help their mate Albo and the ALP in the Federal Election circus. They would also want to finalise the Combined Rail Unions EBA circus, before the EBA circus for the Metro gets revved up with negotiations commencing from late August. To head off any ideas amongst

rail workers of a united much more effective industrial campaign.

The spider's web of the DOO and Privatisation conspiracy provides a key back drop for some mysterious personnel changes. Such as the kicking upstairs to RTBU National Secretary of Alex Claassens from the RTBU NSW State Sec. job and the down fall of Transport Minister Jo Haylen associated with a cooked up media scandal.

Opinion: Is the NSW Government Playing Dirty to Weaken Rail Workers' Deal?

Sydney's rail workers are stuck in a tough fight with the NSW government over a new enterprise agreement, and the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) ban on union action until July 1, 2025, has made it tougher. The government wanted the ban to last until September 2025, hinting at a sneaky plan to force arbitration and push a weaker deal that could bring back driver-only operation (DOO) on the New Intercity Fleet (NIF). For workers drivers, guards, and support staff this dispute is a battle for decent pay, safe jobs, and respect. Let's break down the fight and why the September timeline smells like a set up.

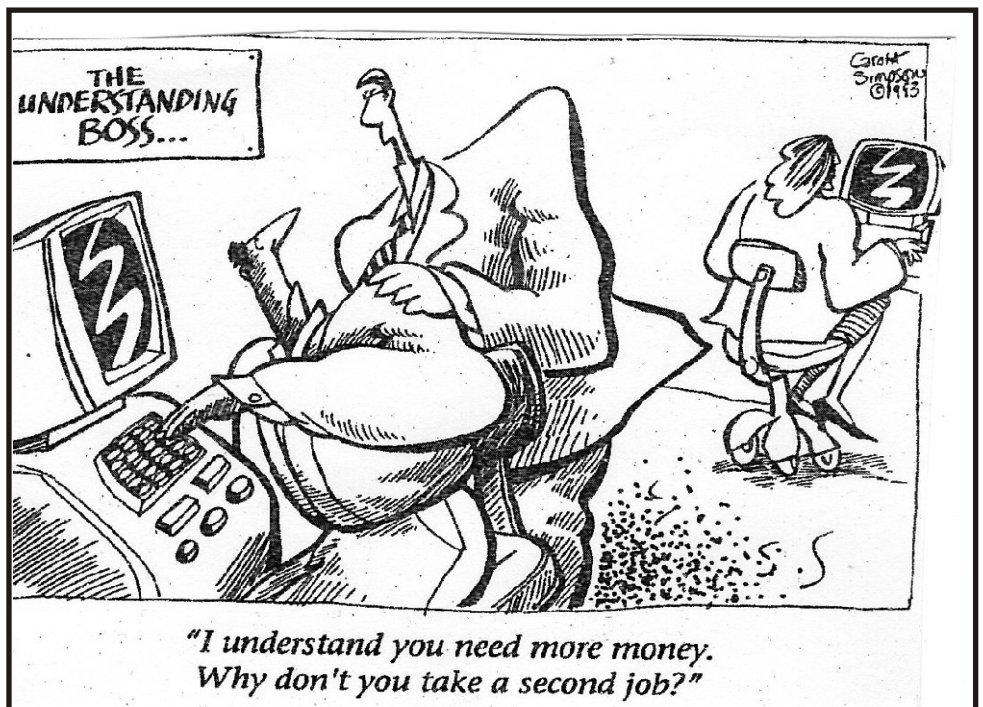
The dispute kicked off when the last agreement expired in May 2024. The Combined Rail Unions (CRU) want a 32% pay rise over four years and a \$4,500 one-off payment, but the government's offering just 15%. For nine months, workers used work bans, slow trains, and sick days to push for a deal, causing chaos like 90% of services cancelled on February 14, 2025. The FWC stepped in, saying the disruptions hurt commuters too much, and banned union action to give both sides time to talk. But the government's push for a September ban, which could lead to

arbitration forcing a deal, raises red flags.

Here's the battle: workers want fair pay to keep up with rising costs and a guarantee that guards stay on NIF trains for safety. The NIF, a \$4 billion fleet, started running in December 2024 with drivers and guards after years of union fights. Back in 2018, the government promised guards, but in 2019, it flipped and pushed DOO, where drivers handle everything using

CCTV. A 2021 court ruling slammed DOO's safety risks CCTV can miss kids or prams leading to a 2023 deal to modify trains for guards, costing \$300 million.

The Conspiracy Angle: Why September? The government's September 2025 timeline isn't random. With only 8-car NIF trains running and modifications unfinished, September could mark when the full 10-car fleet is ready or safety checks are done. If the



government drags this out, it could force arbitration, where the FWC picks the deal. Arbitration might give workers a weaker agreement lower pay, no guard guarantees, or even a step back to DOO. This fits the government's old tricks: cut jobs to save cash and prep for privatization, like Sydney Metro's driverless trains.

What It Means for Workers:

Guards are crucial for safety, especially for kids or disabled passengers, and losing them risks accidents. Drivers would be overloaded without guards, making mistakes more likely. Support

staff need pay that covers bills, not a cheap deal that leaves them struggling. The government's been dodging talks for 44 days, blaming unions for 'wrecking' the network, while unions say it's stalling to wear them down. Both sides are slinging mud, but workers are caught in the crossfire. This fight isn't just about pay it's about keeping jobs safe and fair. If the government gets its way in September, arbitration could gut the agreement, leaving workers with less pay and no guard protections. Unions need to keep pressure on without losing commuter support, but the government's delaying tactics could be a set up to shaft workers and sneak DOO back in.

For Workers:

Keep Guards: Lock in the driver-and-guard model past 2027 for safe trains.

Better Pay: Push for a 32% rise and \$4,500 payment to match living costs.

Fight Smart: Negotiate hard but avoid commuter backlash to win public backing.

Rail workers power Sydney's trains they deserve a deal that protects their jobs and wallets, not a government plot to dilute their rights.

By Railway Johnny

Opinion: Are Rail Unions Missing a Chance to Fight Back with ILO Standards?

Sydney's rail workers are locked in a fierce battle with the NSW government over a new enterprise agreement, demanding a 32% pay rise over four years, a \$4,500 one-off payment, and guaranteed guard roles on the New Intercity Fleet (NIF). The Fair Work Commission (FWC) slammed the brakes on the Combined Rail Unions' (CRU) industrial action work bans, go-slows, and sick leave suspending it until July 1, 2025, to ease commuter chaos and push talks. The government wanted a longer ban until September 2025, hinting at a plan to force arbitration and ram through a weak deal, possibly reviving driver-only operation (DOO) to cut jobs and costs. For workers drivers, guards, and support staff this dispute is about fair pay and safe jobs. But why aren't the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) and Electrical Trades Union (ETU) challenging the FWC's suspension as a violation of International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions?

The ILO, a UN agency, sets global labour rules that Australia follows, like Convention No. 87 (freedom to strike) and No. 98 (collective bargaining). These protect the CRU's right to strike and negotiate, rights the FWCEs



suspension arguably restricts by killing union leverage for four months. The government's stalling dodging talks for 44 days and push for arbitration by September could weaken the agreement, slashing pay or guard roles. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), which includes the RTBU and ETU, links unions to the ILO, letting them file complaints if rights are curbed. The ETU's Federal

Court appeal to overturn the suspension shows some fight, but neither union has flagged an ILO challenge, despite precedent like unions citing ILO breaches in the 2024 CFMEU crackdown.

Why the silence? The RTBU's quick back downs, like pausing a go-slow after government promises, suggest a cautious approach, maybe to avoid legal blowback or keep public support.

The ETU, splitting from the CRU to negotiate alone, might be too focused on its court battle to push an ILO case. Both may doubt an ILO complaint's impact, as Australia's Fair Work Act aligns with ILO rules, and complaints take years. Yet, not using the ILO risks letting the government's delay tactics

possibly a set up to force DOO by September win out, leaving workers with a raw deal.

For Workers:

Push Pay and Safety: Demand 32%

and guards, using ILO-backed bargaining rights.

Challenge the Ban: RTBU and ETU should explore an ILO complaint to expose the suspension's overreach.

By Railway Johnny

LETTER

Dear RW

We all waiting while the Industrial Commission puts together the new EBA.

Management has been refusing to deal

with the unions unless in the Commission.

We are coming into year 2 of pay rises on 01/05/2025.

Yet workers still wait even with a cost

of living crisis.

After the EBA is finalised, the real fireworks with new technology and AI taking out many jobs.

Railway Jeffrey

SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

TWU & RTBU Monkey Business

Dear RW

What a joke is the sell off of Region 6 by RTBU officials to the TWU!

The RTBU membership fee is \$24.40 per fortnight which is equal to \$634.40 per year. Whereas TWU members pay \$17.68 weekly or \$35.36 fortnightly, which is \$919.36 per year. Which is around 45% more than the RTBU members pay. Thanks to the RTBU official, namely Mr Alex Claassens for selling Region 6 to the TWU, the puppet of the NSW ALP.

What the TWU does in Region 6 is shocking, as it only collects union fees. The RTBU Vice President being a TWU delegate at one of the Region 6 depots and Mr Claassens is toothless to deal with it. As he is scared to rock the boat and suspend the RTBU Vice President which is against the RTBU rules. The TWU members pay more union fees to get one week less annual leave and the TWU officials have no balls to fix this.

A Concerned Driver

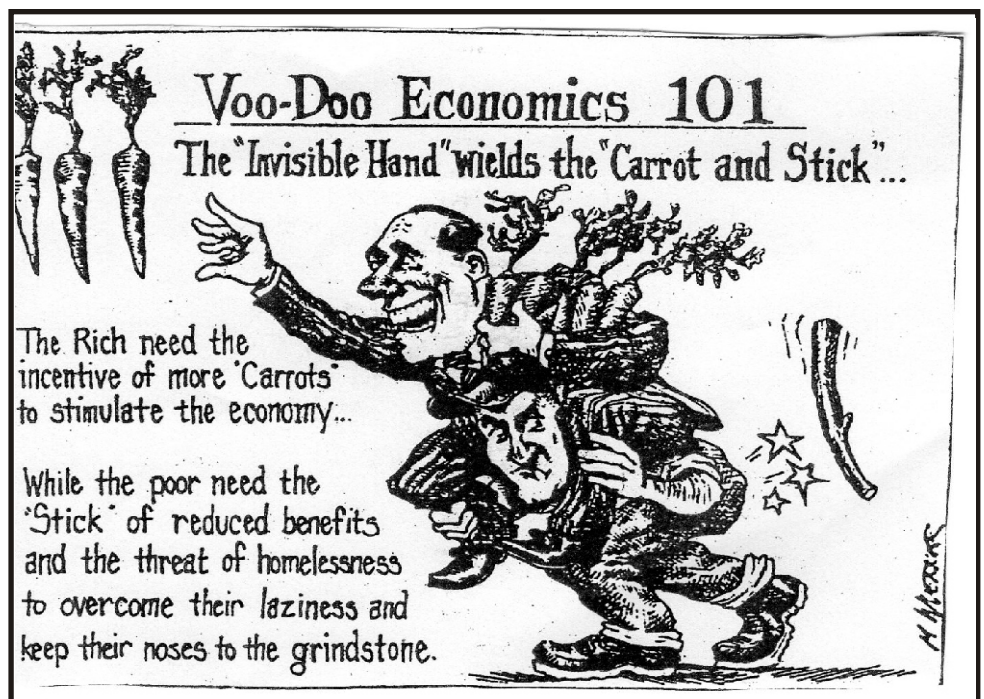
Editorial Comment: Alex Claassens was mysteriously bumped up stairs by

the ALP Godfathers from the RTBU NSW Secretary position to the National Secretary position from 1/7/24. He was replaced in his old job by Toby Warnes long time ALP flunky. Meanwhile David Babineau Bus Division Secretary was slotted in as Acting NSW State Secretary for

Tempe Depot News

RW: What's the latest situation at the depot?

Tempe Driver: We are in a very bad situation. The latest rosters as of early



many months. As Claassens was apparently 'missing in action' prior to his change in position. These changes are likely associated with major opposition to DOO (Driver Only Operation) on the NIF (New Intercity Fleet) in the Loco Division.

April are rubbish! They are worse than the previous rosters. We are continuing to have inadequate running times and layover breaks Monday to Friday. On Saturday and Sunday we are facing an even worse situation with no layover breaks. We have

approached the roster committee to remedy the situation and introduce much more realistic running times with adequate layover breaks. However, we have got no where with them. The roster committee just accepts the existing rosters. As a result of the speed up in our work imposed by management, many drivers at the depot can't cope with the job. They have left the job. Last month there was a surplus of drivers, now there is a shortage at the depot.

Burwood Depot News

RW: What is the situation at the depot?

Burwood Driver: In mid April before Easter we have been in a dire situation! We have been facing constantly worsening rosters, with ever more tightened scheduling and running times. As a result of the tightened running times we are constantly chasing our tails. This situation seems to be particularly affecting runs going into the city such as the 461. However according to other drivers doing other routes at the depot it seems a widespread problem. With the 461, when you get to the terminus in the City you are already running late. Our layover breaks are being wiped out. Then you have 3-4 minutes to get back to the run return start position. Years ago with the 461 we had adequate layover breaks. The origin of this tightening of running time goes back to when we were under the STA (State Transit Authority) prior to privatisation. Under the STA we first started facing the running times tightening. One

reason now for the tightening of running times and the elimination of layover breaks, is that we are doing many more routes so there is inadequate space for standing in layover areas. So the bosses brazenly eliminate our layover breaks.

Leichhardt Depot News

RW: What are latest developments at the depot?

Leichhardt Driver: We are constantly facing worsening rosters. The bosses are continually orchestrating them to cut corners to save money. When we were first privatised and taken over by Transit Systems, we received a forewarning of the nasties to come from management. The new boss brazenly announced to us that he wanted to get rid of all the older drivers! He said, "we don't need you and you can be easily replaced with new drivers." The high up private company bosses which took over following privatisation, seem to have an outlook similar to Elon Musk, who is acting as Trump's hatchet man. I heard the situation is similar or worse and other depots. In the case of Ryde, drivers complain that the new management following privatisation is 'cut throat' with their constant drive for saving dollars.

Kingsgrove Depot News

RW: What are the latest developments with the merged rosters associated with the Region 6

RTBU/TWU Parity Agreement at the depot?

Kingsgrove Driver: There has been a great improvement with the merged rosters from the end of 2023. We now have generally similar rosters with similar lines of work. There has been extended running times introduced.

RW: What your impressions of the union rep?

KD: Our union rep William has done a good job. He was very militant in the campaign to improve the rosters situation. As part of the campaign he mobilised us to get out for a yard union meeting associated with a strike. However, we are still having problems with inadequate layover breaks at the end of our runs. Associated with such issues as late running.

50 Cent Public Transport Fares for NSW

Our community deserves affordable public transport that gets us where we want to go when we want to get there. Unfortunately, Sydney's public transport system is often unreliable, with fares far higher than other states in Australia and other countries around the world.

That's why we're calling on the NSW Labor Government to introduce 50 cent public transport fares across the state. Lowering fares to 50c would save full-time workers a whopping \$2,160 a year. In a cost of living crisis, savings like this can make a huge difference.

K.Shetty

Communist Party claimed it had indisputable evidence that the production of CATL batteries was

connected to forced labour camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

CATL strenuously denied those claims in a statement, saying information about suppliers had been cited in an "inaccurate and misleading way", noting that it had ceased trading with certain suppliers "long ago" and insisting that it adhered to the "highest business and ethical standards".

Former Coalition transport minister Andrew Constance first

ELECTRIC BUS SCANDAL

Electric Buses Procurement Scandal

New South Wales Anti-slavery Commissioner James Cockayne is reviewing the state government's procurement of hundreds of electric buses amid concerns that parts of the vehicles were manufactured using slave labour.

In December the state government announced that it had ordered 319 electric buses as part of its goal to get

1,700 of the vehicles onto Sydney roads by 2028.

The contracts were awarded to Australian-Chinese electric vehicle manufacturers Foton Mobility Distribution (FMD) and VDI Australia, which distributes Yutong buses.

The vehicles use batteries made by Chinese firm Contemporary Amperex Technology Company Limited (CATL).

Last year the United States House Select Committee on the Chinese

procured CATL-powered buses from Yutong in 2020.

CATL makes about 35 per cent of the world's electric vehicle (EV) batteries.

China processes 60 per cent of the world's lithium needed for EV batteries and the majority of the work is carried out in the Xinjiang region.

In a statement to the ABC Dr Cockayne said he was monitoring the government's electric vehicle procurement "given the high modern slavery risks inherent in EV supply chains".

"I have commenced gathering information on government agency due diligence related to modern slavery in relevant supply chains," he said.

The commissioner will report his findings to the NSW Attorney-General, who will then provide the report to the presiding officer of each house of parliament.

FMD has announced it will build a manufacturing hub at Nowra, on the South Coast to assemble the buses.

The company told the ABC in a statement that it had complied with all government procurement regulations.

'Tainted by Uyghur blood'

Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association president Ramila Chanisheff became an activist in 2017 when the People's Republic of China began establishing "re-education" camps for Muslim minorities.

An estimated 80,000 Uyghurs, ethnic Turkic people indigenous to China, were moved out of the Xinjiang province to work in factories between 2017 and 2019, according to a 2020 report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

About 5.8 million people were living as slaves in China in 2021, according to the Global Slavery Index 2023.

Ms Chanisheff said most people within the Australian Uyghur community knew someone who had disappeared.

"Our uncles and cousins and, in some of our cases, it's our parents and sisters - our people have disappeared into these camps and

we've lost connection with them," she said.

Ms Chanisheff said she had been lobbying Dr Cockayne to help prevent Australia from purchasing goods made by slaves.

She said too many imports were "tainted by Uyghur blood" and she was shocked the government could be potentially complicit in its

slavery.

The Anti-slavery Commissioner lists measures online to help governments adhere to the law, including reporting templates and identification tools, but Ms Chanisheff said the law was failing. "There seems to be so many loopholes that industry can get around to bring in these products," she said.

A spokesperson for NSW Minister of



procurement.

China's auto industry is expected to be worth upwards of \$US2 trillion by next year.

A study by the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice at Sheffield Hallam University found that 96 mining or manufacturing companies in the automotive sector were operating in the Uyghur Region, including at least 38 that had documented engagement in state-sponsored labour transfer programs.

Ms Chanisheff called for government contracts with FMD and Yutong to be cancelled.

"It needs to be further investigated because anything that comes from there is not an independent industry and is not separated from forced labour," she said.

Calls to mandate provisions

Under the Public Works and Procurement Act reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that goods and services procured for and by the government are not the product of

Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement Courtney Houssos said the state government was "reforming and strengthening the government's procurement framework".

The spokesperson said in a statement to the ABC that the government would look to implement recommendations made by a recent Legislative Council inquiry into government procurement, "including mandating modern slavery provisions for government contracts in high-risk areas".

A spokesperson for NSW Transport Minister John Graham said in a statement Transport for NSW had been asked to review provisions in the contracts and advise the government whether the deed and financial assessment processes should be strengthened.

The statement said that suppliers appointed to deliver the buses were required to undergo an independent financial assessment and comply with the applicable provisions of the Modern Slavery Act 2018.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of RW we will discuss the use of Velocity trains on Bairnsdale, Warrnambool and Albury services. As in previous issues of RW names of contributors have been changed.

RW: What is the current situation as regards locomotive services?

Rastus and Roscoe: These services are to be phased out over the next couple of years. The N sets which operate these services is being withdrawn. Some sets have been donated to Heritage groups based in Victoria and South Australia. The H sets converted from suburban carriages have already been withdrawn.

RW: What about N class locomotives?

Roscoe: These locomotives are to be leased to Freight Companies for use on grain trains. Already some of the N class locomotives have been leased to Southern Fleet Haul.

RW: What locomotive services are left in Victoria?

Rastus: All services to Swan Hill, a couple of Geelong trains and two services to Warrnambool.

Archie: These services maybe around for another two years.

Clarence: With Swan Hill V/Line services on the line from Bendigo needs a fair amount of upgrading for the operation of Velocity trains. The rumour circulating around V/Line is that the service will be suspended while the line is upgraded.

Ichabod: We will have to wait and see what happens with Swan Hill.

RW: What is the situation regarding the Albury line?

Florence: V/Line has put in a Saturday train at 8.45 am Albury and a 2.30 pm train from Southern Cross to Albury. Extra services with Buses from Albury connecting with trains at Seymour have also been introduced.

Archie: Compulsory seat booking has been introduced on all services. The problem is the Politicians lowered the fares but did not provide extra carriages.

Ichabod: Most passengers from Albury

do a day return to Melbourne, as there are no trains other than the XPT services to Sydney. The first train is about Mid Day for Albury thus an Albury resident cannot go for example to Wagga, Cootamundra or Arden for the day.

Fergus: V/Line fares to Melbourne are unavailable on the XPT trains.

Florence: The Albury trains have Buffet cars but only one person in the Buffet. This works out well as in a three car trains, but what if the train is six cars. The solution: The person in the

divides.

Ichabod: Due to ARTC controlling the Albury line, the Saturday 8.45 train ex Albury was moved to 7.55. In the latest Line Talk Change, the departure was changed to 8.45 am. Line tables were printed and V/Line put these out at stations, but at the last minute ARTC placed the departure back to 7.55 am.

Florence: An amended time table for Saturday was produced and from February 1, the 8.45 am was to be restored. ARTC said 7.55 am was to apply.



Buffet works the rear carriage set to Euroa. After Euroa this person transfers to the front set and opens the Buffet and operates the Buffet to Albury.

RW: Does this happen around the world? We wonder. For Countrylink for example, services on the North West line are staffed on both trains to Werris Creek where the train

Archie: Local stations were notified but someone failed to notify VICRESS resulting in some passengers being booked for the 8.45 am. The passengers showed up for the 8.45 but no train. A friend drove them to Seymour where they caught a local train.

RW: What is the situation regarding Warrnambool?

Florence: The same as Albury. One word: Bedlam.

Archie: The passenger trains were a locomotive and five carriages. These trains have been replaced by three car Velocity train.

Ichabod: One extra train both ways have been introduced. There are now five trains a day to Warrnambool on week days and four on week ends plus compulsory seat bookings.

Rastus: This will not solve the overcrowding. What is needed are four car trains and stations beyond Waurin Ponds extended.

RW: What is happening on the Bairnsdale line?

Ichabod: Most trains to Bairnsdale operate as six car trains except Saturday nights and early Sunday morning when a three car Velocity train is operated.

Archie: This could be a problem on Saturday nights with regard to services to Melbourne because of sporting or social events.

Rastus: V/Line doesn't care. They operate to suit their operational issues not passenger comfort.

Florence: There are no compulsory seat reservations on Bairnsdale trains. Two carriages, are reserved on a six car train. The rest are unreserved.

Roscoe: The only problem is when a unit is removed and the train is operated as a three car unit. It happens regularly if they are short of Velocity trains.

RW: What is the situation with the Melbourne Metro Tunnel test train?

Rastus: Due to questions being raised in State Parliament, since early December V/Line services to Southern Cross have been operating.

Ichabod: They could have operated trains for the last twelve months at certain times instead of forcing passengers to change to buses at East Pakenham.

RW: Once again we have run out of space.

Rastus and Florence: In having the final say V/Line should be looking at instituting Velocity trains to boost Albury and Warrnambool trains. As for the family who missed the 07.55 ex Albury due to a VICRESS bungle. V/Line should give them free tickets for a future journey.

In this issue of RW we will discuss Human Resources. As in previous issues of Sparks drivers, Head Office staff and conductors will discuss these issues. Names have been changed.

RW: How long has the current management of Human Resources been controlling V/line?

Diedre: Since V/Line resumed government ownership. Before December 2002 V/Line Human Resources was a department of National Express who obtained the franchise to operate V/Line in August 1999.

Archie: In December 2002 National Express placed the franchises of V/Line, M/Train into receivership. One of the outcomes of this receivership was V/Line in October 2003 reverted to Government control. M/Train was absorbed by CONNEX and M/Tram was absorbed by Yarra Trams,

Ichabod: With V/Line reverting to the Government control a new Human Resources department was set up with outside appointees.

Clarence: Recruitment for conductors and station staff was by advertising in the media. A job applicant had a complete normal aptitude test. If successful you obtained an interview before a panel who consisted of a Department Head, Senior Manager and sometimes an employee from Personnel. Most times it was a Department Head. The procedure was the same for internal appointees. The head of the Department judged whether you were suitable.

Jethro: For internal appointee if a candidate was unsuccessful you had a right of appeal. At the appeal you had to show why you were superior to the successful candidate.

Rastus: Drivers from V/Line were recruited from second persons who were successful in passing out for driving. From 1998 onwards due to line closures in rural Victoria, drivers were compulsorily transferred to the Suburban Trains with a 'Right of Return' to V/Line. (Before 1983 it was Victorian Railways) This agreement was continued when Privatisation was implemented. In 1999 National

Express appointed drivers internally. A number of conductors were successful but until 2009 the Right of Return applied.

Roscoe: From 2009 driver positions were open to internal applications within V/Line.

Diedre: From 2004 V/Line employees noted that Human Resources was not the old style Personnel Branch.

RW: In what way?

Archie: Employees noticed that the heads of the HR were anti union and started to throw their weight around. It was also noted that 'Yes' men were appointed to various supervisory positions who did not have the guts to stand up to this department.

Jethro: The 'Right of Appeal' was removed. It was HR's decision who they appointed and that was final.

Ichabod: Over the years job vacancies for conductor service managers, station managers, administration officers and Authorised Officers were advertised. Long serving employees applied for these positions.

Clarence: Sadly most of the long serving employees were passed over and morale amongst employees hit an all time low. External applicants were appointed.

Jethro: A new type of test was introduced. This test was a psychometric test. This test was used by HR Department overseers and was now being applied throughout V/Line. HR stated this test was the way to obtain a suitable employee.

Roscoe: HR also said employees had to do in their fellow workers if these workers had done something wrong.

Archie: The unwritten rule around the rail industry was that you did not do in your work mates. With OH&S issues, if a fellow employee was doing the wrong thing, the union delegate spoke to this employee.

Rastus: By 2014 the drivers noted a certain conductor was dobbing in drivers on Customer Service issues. This conductor was not in the union and thought that dobbing on drivers would get him a promotion. It didn't happen.

Clarence: Two employees had to face HR. The union defended both

employees and they were cleared. The incident was the result of a customer complaint. The customer alleged one of the conductors was rude. With the other conductor, they tried to discipline was told by HR that he should have dobbed the employee in.

Rastus: You are correct. Employees who make this list are employees who stood up to HR over job selection. Appearing as witnesses to employees who are facing disciplinary hearings.

Ichabod: About 16 years ago a conductor service manager dobbed in an employee saying this employee did not close the power doors on the train. Another employee appeared at the inquiry to support the employee. HR did not want to hear this employee. The union intervened and the employee was cleared.

Archie: This employee was marked for the rest of his employment at V/Line.

Diedre: These incidents are just two examples of what has happened over the years.

RW: Once again we have run out of space. If you want a report of all incidents with HR over the last 12 years refer to the following issues of Sparks. Issues, 129, 130, 135, 139, 143, 147, 154, 156, 157, 160 and 170. These issues are available on-line.

Rastus and Roscoe: We will close this article with a full paragraph of an article which appeared in an English Railway Magazine: Backtrack Volume 35 No.11 November 2021 'The Shadow Franchise 1988-1991' by Richard Clarke.

"Psychometric Test being applied for Job Interviews. This test was springing

up in every HR Department as a new service for recruiting employees as well as promotions. Many unsuitable individuals were getting into quite senior positions through this process."

This was being applied in the United Kingdom. You can see where HR copied it from.

STOP PRESS

As this issue of RW goes to press V/Line has had a shake up in its Human Resources Department. A new head of Department has been appointed from outside. It is rumored, he is going to appoint his friends to the various HR positions. Details in a future issue.

Federal Election Circus Continued from page 2

propaganda, and ultimately a military coup. In other words, it backs down, or it is brought down.

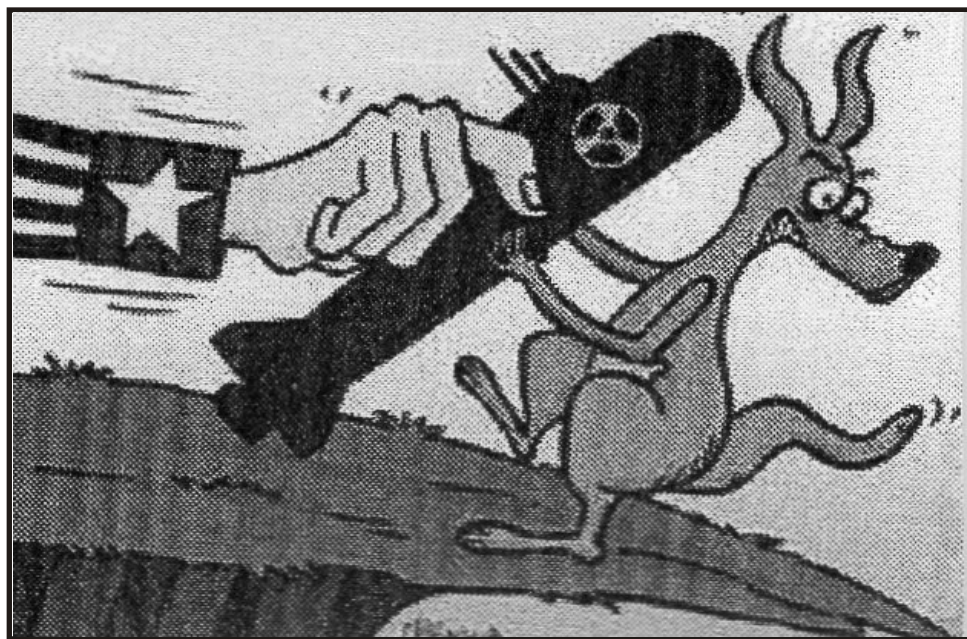
Government policy is ultimately designed to serve the interests of capitalism as a system. Who wins power, and how they use it, has very little to do with ideology, and is instead largely determined by the balance of class forces. Absent any pressure from workers, elections are essentially contests between different factions of the ruling class. But when workers are sufficiently organised and consistently striking, the State has to step in to manage the conflict.

The logic of industrial action is that a strike forces bosses to meet workers' demands to keep profits flowing. Likewise, when the wider working class flexes its muscle, capital turns to left-wing parties to rein things in. This is why, in the 1970s, the militancy and organised density of the Australian working class made a progressive Labor Party the natural fit for managing capitalism.

On the flip side, this also means that with the once bureaucratic reformist unions becoming corporate unions (associated with the ALP/ACTU Accord and subsequent Un-official Accord era) giving up on any effective industrial action and

becoming integrated at the top levels into the corporate set up, we lose our leverage over the State. By the 1980s, the international working class had forced capitalism into a crisis of profitability which could only be

organised on the job are in the unique position to uproot the power of capital at its source. Only by taking control of our workplaces can we take the whip out of the capitalists' hands and transform society.



resolved through either revolution or the smashing of workers' power. Socialist and Labor governments around the world were either thrown out of power, or worked with their union bureaucrats friends to criminalise strikes and pacify what remained of the rank and file.

But an independent workers' movement could have taken another path. Unlike political parties, workers

Reforms without Reformism

None of this means that we ignore the need to fight for reforms. But we insist that reforms are the product of class struggle, not elections. Some socialists argue that we can 'do both' but the two strategies pull in opposite directions.

When workers are busy door-knocking for candidates, they aren't building their own power in workplaces, unions, and other campaigns. As a working class movement, grounded primarily in industrial strength, we can win reforms like wage increases, an end to Australian support for Israel, better work conditions, and the extension of civil rights protections.

Under capitalism, these victories are always partial and precarious, particularly if the movement is isolated in one country. But anarcho-syndicalists don't just fight for reforms because they improve workers' lives. These struggles build the power and the confidence of the workers involved. By confronting the bosses, participating in

democratic meetings, and shaping the conditions of their work, workers develop the specific skills and forms of power that will be necessary for any successful revolution. Can the same be said of elections?

Thanks to MACG Edited

Interview with Israeli Anarchist & Anti Zionist Ilan Shalif

Born in 1937, Shalif can be described as the living history of anarchism in Israel. He was a member of the Israeli socialist organisation Matzpen (1962- 1983) - a collective that resembled in spirit other important and influential revolutionary collectives of the time, such as Socialisme ou Barbarie (SoB) in France, and London Solidarity (LS). There were also ties that connected all three of these initiatives, most notably Akiva Orr, who was a member of both Matzpen and LS while working with Castoriadis of SoB. Matzpen offered Israeli society a break with Stalinism, blind loyalty to the Soviet Union and Zionism, promoting instead a non-dogmatic libertarian vision. Matzpen introduced radically new ideas both as a collective and as an individual. Akiva Orr translated Castoriadis's essay "The Greek City and the Making of Democracy" into Hebrew, while Ilan Shalif translated Bookchin's book "Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Gap."

After Matzpen disbanded, Shalif continued his activity, participating in other initiatives in Israel, such as Anarchists Against the Wall and the now defunct anarchist federation Ahdut[Unity].

Despite his advanced age, he remains firm in his political ideas and continues his activism today, participating in solidarity actions with the Palestinian people, as well as in the continuous demonstrations against Netanyahu with other anarchists, in addition to actively participating in the editorial team of A-Infos.

He is the author of numerous articles on

direct democracy, counter-power, and psychology. He is also the author of the novel "Glimpses of the Year 2100 (50 Years After the Revolution)" - a story about life in a future directly democratic society.

Ilan Shalif: Israel continues to terrorise and massacre the population of the Gaza Strip. It still hopes to force more people to leave Gaza, but in reality he is simply dragging out the time by avoiding the moment when he will



Casualty of an Israeli air raid in Gaza

Verbatim: Let's start with what is happening in Gaza today. The world is witnessing the massacre of the population of an entire region, while the major powers of the Middle East are, as many fear, on the verge of starting a generalised war (mainly Israel and Iran, but also Turkey and Saudi Arabia, under the benevolent gaze of Russia and the United States). What is your assessment of the situation?

admit defeat, when he will have to release Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Israeli hostages, and when he will allow a new administration that is not in direct opposition to the Palestinian administration of the West Bank to run the Gaza Strip. The brink of a third world war is nothing but an exaggeration.

Israel cannot start such a war, not even a major confrontation, without the consent of the United States. Low-

intensity wars between Turkey and the Kurds, between Hezbollah (used by Iran) and Israel, and Israel acting on behalf of US interests seeking to expel Russian military forces from Syria, are not prerequisites for the outbreak of a world war.

Verbatim: What can be the solution to this sad situation? What was the initial proposal of the Jewish left for Palestine?

I.S.: Until 1948, Hashomer Hatzair, the main left-wing Zionist force at the time, said they were in favor of a binational state, but on the condition that it be dominated by Jews. So we cannot speak of true equality. After '48, they supported the grabbing of lands abandoned by displaced Palestinians to create more kibbutzim. Their leftism was more about deceiving young Israelis born in the country, who tended to the left, to keep them within the Zionist framework. And the truth is that they succeeded for a while.

Verbatim: And then comes Matzpen...

I.S.: Matzpen is something else entirely. It began as a small tendency within the Communist Party of Israel that opposed the party's dominant Zionist-Marxist orientation and its unequivocal support for the Soviet Union and Stalinism. Because of these disagreements, the people who formed this tendency were expelled from the party and created Matzpen as an anti-Zionist and anti-capitalist organisation. In the following years, due to the lack of other anti-Zionist organisations, Matzpen was joined by other anti-Zionist Jews from different tendencies: Trotskyists, Maoists, anarchists. Thus, our organisation acquired a completely different and autonomous political character, which would later lead to the split of some of the Fourth International, Trotskyists and Maoists of Matzpen. But even after the split, there were still some Trotskyists who would remain in the organisation along with the rest of the Marxist left and anarchists. Matzpen was the most radical left-wing and anti-Zionist revolutionary organisation in Israel

during its existence.

Verbatim: Were there any collaborations between Matzpen and socialist groups composed of Palestinian Arabs?

I.S.: There were some Arab activists who worked with Matzpen****. They were attracted by our anti-Zionist orientation. In response, the Communist Party tried to frame us as traitors and intelligence agents. We had collaborations with Arabs who were loosely associated with the Al-Ard movement, a movement that revolved around the idea of Palestinians, Jews and other ethnic groups living in a secular, democratic country. These were the kind of Arab activists we were in contact with. We also worked a lot with village communities. At the time, there was a village, called Tira, which has since evolved into a city. And the locals joked that if Tira ever became a city, they would elect me mayor, because we went there very often to organise political events and sell copies of the magazine Matzpen, which was written partly in Hebrew and partly in Arabic. The Arabs in these communities accepted us as political friends.

When one of our members was arrested, they helped us collect signatures for his release. They helped us and had good relations with us because they accepted us as comrades in the fight against Zionism.

Verbatim: After the dissolution of Matzpen, what other autonomous and libertarian organisations were created?

I.S.: Throughout these years there were small groups of "lifestyle anarchists". They were mainly organised around animal rights and the Anonymous movement. In the early 2000s, the Anarchists Against the Wall initiative was formed around animal rights and social anarchists, which was active until the end of 2010. There was also, for a time during the 2010s, an anarchist federation called Ahdut (Unity), founded by Jews of Russian origin. There was also some Palestinians (one or two) who

participated, but we have to keep in mind that it was very dangerous for Arabs to engage in such activities, so even though there were others who were generally interested, they avoided organising in Ahdut. Unfortunately, it only worked for 6 or 7 years and then it dissolved.

When they first contacted me, I told them that I would only be interested if it was a serious organisation that regularly held meetings. After some time they started organising more seriously, and so I became a member. Unfortunately, after some time it gradually started to dissolve. At the moment there is an active anarchist group, again mainly composed of Russian Jews, called Kompass. But it is a relatively young team...

Verbatim: You also participated in the Anarchists Against the Wall...

I.S.: Yes, in the past I was also actively involved in the Anarchists Against the Wall. Although there were anarchist activists in it (many of whom were not of the kind of social and pro-organisational anarchism that I adhere to), in its nature it was not an anarchist initiative. It was born from a series of joint actions of Jewish activists (some of them anarchists) and Palestinian Arabs against the occupation. One of these actions was organised under the slogan "Anarchists against the Wall". This got a lot of publicity and so they decided to keep the name because, before that, every action was called with a different slogan. So it was, first of all, an anti-Zionist initiative, rather than anarchist. But as time went by, some of the non-anarchist participants of Anarchists against the Wall became more receptive to libertarian ideas, some even started to call themselves anarchists.

Verbatim: Do you know of any anarchist groups in the West Bank or Gaza?

I.S.: I know that there are some Palestinians who follow anarchism, but they are afraid to organise because it is too dangerous for them on both sides of the wall. When the Ahdut anarchist federation was still active, we met some Palestinian activists in some

villages in the occupied territories who saw our activity positively. When we printed (and translated) our opinion on the conflict in the region and gave copies to activists in the Palestinian village of Bil'in and to activists of the common struggle in other places, almost all of them expressed their agreement with our anarchist communist position. In general, I think that most Palestinians throughout the region (Gaza, the West Bank and Israel) agree with some form of coexistence with the Jews, not because they like us too much or anything, but because this is the reality now. I do not agree with the radical Islamists' proposal to expel all Jews.

There was a poll in Gaza before the October attack that showed that about a third of its residents favored a society, with the Jews remaining in it. There is, however, a "Palestinian" group that pretends to be anarchists: Fauda. But they are not anarchists. They talk, for example, about God. And they are not even Palestinians. They are frauds.

It is a group that pretends to be both Palestinian and anarchist.** There are too many signs pointing in this direction. I do not know if it is just a group of crazy people from abroad or if it is a creation of the secret services. I honestly do not know.

Verbatim: What about the ongoing mass protests against the Netanyahu government that started already last year? Do you see the potential for more than just a demand to replace one politician with another?

I.S.: The ongoing mass demonstrations express the more moderate social democratic Zionism against the more right-wing Zionism, which has a more chauvinistic and even fascist character and is a champion of extreme neoliberal capitalism. Nevertheless, anti-authoritarian perspectives can emerge from any mass demonstration and direct action, and that is why, yes, we participate in the demonstrations. The main Zionist side of the protests is used to us and rarely engages in bickering with us.

There were a few hundred people from the radical left at these demonstrations who opposed the occupation. At the

beginning I personally counted 20-30 anarchists, but they participated in a dis-organised way. I started walking around with a big black and red flag at these demonstrations alone for about a year. Little by little, young Russian Jews followed me, and some of the young Russian activists from Kompass also came with their banners. As a result, at the May Day demonstration this year we again had an anarchist block for the first time since the dissolution of Ahdut.

Verbatim: And what are your thoughts on the Hamas rule over Gaza until the October massacre?

I.S.: Of course, I think it cannot get worse. It is not a lie, of course, that Israel in turn facilitated the rise to power of radical Orthodox Muslims in the Gaza Strip, helping to create Hamas in its internal policy against the Palestinian Authority.

Verbatim: Now let's change the subject. You lived on a kibbutz. Can you tell us more about life on the kibbutz?

I.S.: Keep in mind that kibbutzim were subsidised by the capitalist Jewish elite because they were the cheapest way to colonise Palestine. But within the kibbutz communities there was, in fact, a level of direct democracy - from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. They usually operated without wage labourers until 1948. But today there are few who, even after the privatisation of nearly all the kibbutzim, continue to adhere to the old way of organising them.

Verbatim: When did the decline of the kibbutz begin?

I.S.: You see, in 1948 the economy changed. There were many options to exploit cheap migrant labour, and some kibbutz communities benefitted from this. After 1977, when the leftist Mapai party (dominant in the Zionist project for many years: from before the creation of Israel in 1948 until 1977) lost parliamentary power, the capitalists began to push most kibbutzim to become more and more

dependent on foreign capital.

Most of the kibbutzim were active in agriculture and did not do very well because their subsidies were stopped. It was a new era, very different from that of 1948, when about 75% of the economy was owned by cooperatives and socialised enterprises.

Verbatim: So, in a way, this was one of the limitations of the kibbutzim - that they were too small and isolated from each other, so that they were overly dependent on state capital and resources? Because of this they could not create their own system?

I.S.: The problem is that from the very beginning they were subsidised by the Zionist system. A few of them prospered economically, but most operated on the verge of bankruptcy. In the kibbutzim, the left identified themselves as Zionist-Marxist (but in reality they were more Zionist than Marxist), while a few adhered to the ideas of libertarian communism. You see, in the 1950s there was a split in the Communist Party, which was part of the Zionist establishment that built Israel because of the establishment's choice to align itself with the United States in the Korean War. So, there was a tendency of Marxist-Leninists leaving the mainstream Communist Zionist-Marxist Party. Because of this, a mass expulsion of Marxist-Leninists from the kibbutz followed. Probably several hundred were expelled. People who worked and lived for many years on these kibbutzim were expelled mercilessly, simply because they refused to conform to Zionism. I was probably one of the last to be expelled from a kibbutz because I had very radical leftist views and anti-Zionist activities. But because of the political environment at the time and the continuous persecution of political dissidents in Russia, it became unpopular to expel people based on their views. So there were several months of fighting inside the kibbutz between those who wanted to expel me and those who did not want to do so.

Although the rest of the members did not like my anti Zionist ideas and activities, I was one of the hardest farm

workers and was elected in my radical Zionist past three times as head of the Political Committee (for a political working out of the kibbutz). But in the end the die hard Zionist-Marxist side prevailed, with 60% of the kibbutz members voting in favor of my expulsion, so the kibbutz had to pay me compensation.

But I think that after me no one has been expelled from a kibbutz (for political reasons) because the precedent of high compensations created problems for the kibbutz budgets.

Verbatim: Were there any disagreements within the kibbutz about the inclusion of Palestinian Arabs?

I.S.: The kibbutz, being aligned with the Zionist system from the

beginning, almost never accepted Arab members, even the most left-wing kibbutzim. There was a tendency of the Arabs to accept Zionism and some of them even lived inside the kibbutz, not as members, but as trainees.

And as soon as their training was over, they were denied membership. No one gave them land or part of the budget.

In conclusion, we can say that, despite all these flaws, the kibbutz was a laboratory where certain libertarian ideas and practices were indeed tested, but to a limited extent and time.

Verbatim.: Thank you very much for your time!

*Verbatim is a libertarian digital space that started its activity in the fall of

2019. Since then, it continues to run the website of the same name with libertarian material and articles. <https://aftoleksi.gr/taytotita/>

**The website of the Russian anarchist group Autonomous Action published an article with similar conclusions on Fauda.

I.S.: Since the beginning and in spite Israeli state persecution of Palestinian citizens who joined matzpen there were Palestinian members in Matzpen.

<https://www.anarchistcommunism.org/2025/04/14/palestine-antimilitarist-jackdaw-special-out-now/>

UKRAINE: CRISIS & WAR

Ukraine without the USA

Of course, everyone is talking about the scandal that took place in the White House on the last day of February, on Friday. The details can be found on thousands of news sites, but in a few words: Ukrainian President Zelensky flew to the United States supposedly to sign an agreement on America's priority access to Ukrainian resources, which (again, supposedly) was supposed to lead to a truce in the war in Ukraine. Part of the negotiations were public, and there Trump and Zelensky quarreled, so in the end the agreement was not signed, Trump said that "Zelensky does not want peace", and Zelensky himself either left the White House or was kicked out, and flew back to Europe.

Surely by the time this issue of "trends" is published, some more inside information will appear about what it was at all. But let's try to reflect on what happened with the information that is available now. Well, it is important to remember that Autonomous Action does not have any special piety towards any presidents or state borders. We care about people, and we believe that confronting Kremlin aggression is in the interests of the vast majority of people (see a detailed description of our position here). But let's return to

Trump and his warm company of billionaires and far-right activists. First, why were all these negotiations

not fawn, dared to disagree with the great negotiator and repeated about "security guarantees". Then Trump decided that he needed to change his role, took off the mask of a kind Uncle Sam who accepts the prodigal Ukrainian son, and put on the mask of



broadcast publicly even before the conclusion of the subsoil agreement, and not held entirely behind closed doors? Perhaps this was a deliberate trap for Zelensky. Trump is obviously an extremely narcissistic egoist. And so he made such a show out of the negotiations in order to publicly demonstrate to the whole world how Ukrainians bow down and fawn before him, the great negotiator. Zelensky did

an offended patriot who was offended by the fact that Zelensky was talking to the great American president "without due respect." Apparently, Trump hopes that both of these images will be favourably received by his voters and sponsors.

Secondly, I can't help but think that this quarrel between Zelensky and Trump is a repeat of the events of late February 2022. Then no one expected that the Ukrainians would resist the

Russian army, although everything was against them. But they did resist, and they are still resisting. So here, in February 2025: no one expected that a representative of small Ukraine, which is in an extremely difficult situation, would dare to go into direct conflict with the president of the largest and most powerful state on Earth. But he dared, when they were obviously trying to humiliate him. In both cases, the Ukrainians retained their dignity, but at a high price.

Thirdly, as far as we can judge from the information available now, the agreement on Ukrainian mineral resources that was planned to be signed was absolutely enslaving and would have effectively confirmed Ukraine's status as a US colony. 50% of all future mineral resources, control over sea ports, all that stuff. This is colonialism in its purest form, straight out of the 18th century. At the same time, Ukraine received nothing in exchange, no security guarantees, except for a ghostly hope in the spirit of "well, we have committed to paying tribute, maybe now the US will somehow help us." Actually, it is quite possible to imagine specific "security guarantees" that could be spelled out in this document. More precisely, it would probably be better to call them "obligations" rather than "guarantees." Well, something like "we, the US, in exchange for half of your resources, promise to stop the Russian army's advance within such and such a time frame, and if Russia starts an offensive again, the US will provide direct military assistance." But it was immediately clear that Trump was not going to promise anything like that. And he is not going to promise anything at all, he just wants to maintain his image as a cool guy and throw new sources of income to his billionaire friends.

There is an opinion that it was necessary to sign this agreement on the subsoil anyway, because "if American corporations get rights to Ukrainian resources, then the USA will protect Ukraine from Putin." I do not think that such logic would have worked. Let's assume that the agreement is concluded. But Putin continues the war, and in a few years (let's assume) he seizes all or almost all of Ukraine, puts

a puppet government in Kyiv. Well, after that, he may well continue to observe this agreement (at least for some time). As is known, Putin is quite ready to share Russian raw materials with the USA, in exchange for stopping support for Ukraine. Well, the American elites in principle do not care what colour flag will be flying over Kiev, as long as the money flows. They would not provide any protection from Putin.

Putin and Trump: Brothers Forever

It is also very interesting to observe the contrast between Putin and Zelensky. Putin obviously understands Trump well and is extremely cynically sucking up to him (although he probably hates him deep down). Russian propaganda immediately after the scandal in the White House began a massive bombardment of the brains of its viewers with messages like "the US President put Zelensky in his place." It seems that Trump himself is no less an important recipient of this propaganda - he really likes this role of "tamer of the impudent Ukrainian." At the same time, the Kremlin is giving Trump signals that Russia is ready to resume trade relations and is generally very open to cooperation - "not like this Ukraine"! In general, the Kremlin is using Trump's cockroaches to the fullest - largely because Trump and Putin have very similar mind sets. Both are cynical autocrats with a bunch of complexes and hyper-conservative views.

It is unlikely that Putin expects that he will actually take Kyiv in the near future, but, apparently, he hopes to at least minimize losses and maximize profits. For example, it is important for him to create some semblance of universal recognition that Crimea and Donbass are integral parts of Russia. That is why there are words that if American corporations decide to return to Russia, then we will, of course, let them in, but they must be sure to open branches in the occupied territories! In general, for Putin this will already be some kind of "victory": they say, they have achieved international recognition of new territories. For a normal person, it sounds monstrous that three years of

war and 165 thousand human lives on the Russian side alone can be given for this, but for Putin, these are trifles. And for now, of course, it seems to Putin that everything is going according to plan: any disagreements between Ukraine and the United States are in his interests.

Free people don't need a leader

It is also important that these events have highlighted the increasingly obvious rift between the (Trump) US and Europe. Immediately after America, Zelensky headed to London. Almost all European elites immediately expressed support for Ukraine and promised to continue military aid, with the exception of a few of Putin's friends, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. This split in the once united NATO bloc should be kept in mind by anyone who wants to change something in the world around them - including anarchists. Keep it in mind and look at things soberly, without placing great hopes on any officials, even if they are not as frankly crazy as Donald Trump.

For example, the head of EU diplomacy, Kaja Kallas, also expressed support for Ukraine, and even attacked Trump personally. But how exactly did she do it? Quote: "Today it became clear that the free world needs a new leader."

Oh, Kaja. No, free people and the free world do not need "leaders" at all. It was the desire for a "strong hand and a strong leader" that made millions of Americans vote for Trump - and 25 years ago, Russian society fell into the same trap with Putin. Concentration of power and leadership in the hands of a few inevitably leads to inequality, injustice, wars and fascism. There is only one reliable cure for this - self-government, when people take responsibility for their lives, and do not hand it over to a "new leader" who will supposedly save everyone. Sometimes it is called "anarchy", although we prefer to say "libertarian communism".

The episode was prepared by Mani Edited <https://avtonom.org/news/ni-trampa-ni-putina-trendy-poryadka-i-haosa-epizod-199>

Debate on the Woolworths Distribution Workers' Strike & Corporate Union 'Smoke & Mirrors' Performance

Back in December 2024, Woolworths distribution workers accepted an Enterprise Bargain Agreement after 17 days on strike which cost the company upwards of \$140 million dollars. The strategy of organising undertaken by the United Workers Union (UWU) demonstrates what it means to walk the daggers edge between exercising workers power by fighting bosses and avoiding union de-registration and government fines. We think it's an interesting case study to discuss whether or not it represents a viable strategy for a fighting workers movement longer term.

On the 21st of November 2024, 1,800 Woolworths and Lineage workers kicked off indefinite strikes across three states, a total of five distribution hubs and cold storage units run by Primary Connect, the supermarket giant's supply chain arm. Organisers remarked that it was a 10 year process leading up to the strike action. The strategy was to line up the EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) negotiations for the five shops and strike to demand an immediate pay rise of 25% with further rises indexed to inflation, as well as changes to an AI productivity 'framework' that scores workers according to a speed metric, so management can discipline and even fire those who fail to meet 100 percent targets. Woolworths is one half of Australia's supermarket duopoly and controls 37% of the country's grocery market. Striking workers managed to shut down 75% of Woolworths output.

To further crank up the pressure on Woolworths bosses, the strike action coincided with the holiday season across Victoria and New South Wales. News coverage showed shelves notably empty of essential items like toilet paper, nappies, bread, meat, dairy, frozen food, with drinks at Dan Murphy's and BWS also affected. Every night, corporate news stations found people to sook about the strike and blame the workers for ruining Christmas, while Christmas-themed ads for Woolworths played in the ad breaks.

The Dandenong South warehouse saw

200 workers on strike. ItEs responsible for 40% of Woolworths output and 85 percent of the workforce had joined UWU since the warehouse opened. Only 10 workers in the whole warehouse were in the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), a notoriously yellow union. Notably, Woolworths moved distribution to the location after shuttering it's Hume store which was heavily unionised, gutting 700 jobs all up and promising an increase in efficiency and productivity with half the employment rate at the new site.

Community, left-wing groups and other unionists showed out in support. Victorian Socialists were prominent early on. Over the length of the strike the picket was maintained by a small but committed group of militant unionists (not in UWU) parking their cars in front of the driveway and playing uno on the nature strip.

Woolworths' strike-breaking tactics are worthy of note. They locked workers out, erected bollards over the main driveway, and installed Wilson Security guards who occasionally reported the movements of workers and supporters to management. Worryingly, there was a police solar trailer with cameras surveillance of workers and supporters for the duration of the action which was also noted at the Webb Dock picket earlier this year.

Labour hire company Programmed came to the aid of Woolworths, keeping what picketers dubbed alternative workers in an abandoned building down the road until they could be piled onto buses at a moment's notice when security reported a sufficient opening in the picket.

Woolies bosses left no stone unturned, sooking to the pro-boss FairWork commission, which ruled against the workers, arguing that UWU was not bargaining in 'good faith' with Woolworths, and that the picket lines were 'obstructive' and a 'metaphorical gun' that undermined the bargaining process. The possibility of protected

action for unions stops just short of disrupting companies like Woolworths from continuing business as usual with scab labour. Strikes are permissible, but not pairing them with a hard picket of the workplace would gut the bargaining power of the strike and render it futile. In this scenario, striking would be akin to quitting 'en masse'.

The capitalist class has been clear that it would prefer if workers came to the bargaining table and asked politely for a raise, so workers could be rejected without it affecting their companies' bottom line. With arbitration laws and unions placed into administration, they get ever closer to that reality every year. In the bosses ideal world, unions would be functionally useless advocacy bodies for workers that can do little more than ask nicely, and give the illusion that real bargaining is happening and workers have a say, when in reality they don't. The worrying thing is, union bureaucrats can be sold on this reality too. A passive funding base of workers dues and no hard organising work risking fines or de-registration. The bosses hand out the union sign up sheets with workers contracts. The union gets their funds, the bosses get their profits and the workers get shafted. This is the strategy of yellow unions like the SDA.

Because Fair Work is not a court, there would be no impact if workers decided to continue picketing anyway. Woolworths would have to bring proof that the Fair Work order was not being complied with before seeking enforcement in Federal Court. They would do this by trying to get scabs in and upon workers or community picketers turning the scabs away, they would have a case, serve the strikers with an injunction, and eventually that would lead to police removing picketers by force.

Upon the Fair Work ruling alone, community picketers were warned not to talk to workers or organisers, in order to not be seen to be colluding. Workers seemed to be staying away from the picket line from this point. It was as if the injunction had already been served and everyone was waiting for the picket to be smashed by police, but no order yet existed.

At a particularly weak point in the picket one morning, a bus had arrived and managed to get some workers in. A garbage truck had been turned away from entering by a group of about 10 community picketers linking arms, which seemed to be the excuse for Woolworths to go to court to request police intervention to end the picket. The news media was conveniently right there to snap photos of the affair.

With no plan, no coordination or briefing with organisers at all, the defence of the strike was about as organised as could be expected. Community picketers discussed what would happen if the police came, what people would be prepared to do to defend the strike. \$142k had been raised in a community strike fund, \$50k donated by the ETU, and the muscle of the strike ended up being a skeleton crew of committed randoms, eating from the local servo because they couldn't eat the food provided by union funds for fear of accusations of collusion. Expecting police to roll in soon, some of the picketers concluded they'd be willing to hold the picket beside workers risking arrests and fines, not get arrested and fined in their place. All tentative plans were interrupted by the workers taking a deal.

Not long after we heard news about NSW distribution hubs accepting a similar deal, the workers voted to accept an agreement which included around an 11% percent wage increase over three years, along with some cash and gift-card payments to workers. Related to the AI productivity changes, workers in VIC had won 'No disciplinary action solely on performance', which is legally ambiguous at best and begs the question whether bosses could find ways around the agreement. UWU Secretary Tim Kennedy worded it slightly differently in an official statement, saying about the clause that it 'ensures workers will not be disciplined for the speed they can work at'. The statement also says that Woolworths made 'an acknowledgement that not everyone can pick at 100%'.

Woolworths has been known to use deliberately misleading language in other negotiations. For supermarket

workers, the SDA endorsed a deal that mapped pay rises to Fair Works' new award rates and this was sold as a massive concession on behalf of the bosses.

Is this really the future of unionism?

The efforts the union made to maximise workers power, coupled with the caution and self-preservation practised by the union at the strike would lend itself to the idea that union officials were interested in costing Woolworths as much as possible in a short period of time to put the pressure on the company to wrap the dispute before there would be time to serve an injunction and rack up fines. Whatever the workers can get in that time period would be what they get.

But to expedite negotiations by bleeding Woolworths out, organisers and workers had to spend 10 arduous years organising multiple job-sites, to go on strike together and at the first whiff of an unfavourable Fair Work ruling their campaign had to be brought to home base by disorganised community members the union didn't communicate with, plan with or fund. Community members that had to patch together a hard picket and incur potential risks to themselves, in order for the union and workers to avoid the same. If what we saw here is the piece de resistance of union strategy in the modern day, then we have a problem.

What this implies is that unions that want to fight are trying to balance wins for workers and also the survival of the union entity itself, but because of current anti-union laws, these things eat into each other. If this same strategy is emulated, it won't be long before bosses realise that no matter the costs to the company, they can call a union's bluff by waiting for an injunction so the union folds like a house of cards, and likely that wasn't long away for UWU strikers.

Bosses get to act like entitled children, but workers, unionists and community members are trying not to swear on the picket line cos it might be picked up on a hired goon's body camera, police surveillance tower, or featured on the 6 O'clock news. Even slightly masculine or tattooed people were followed

around the picket by cameras so the news media could play the 'union thug' card the bosses love so much.

The law has been continuously weaponised against workers and unions. Understanding what class war looks like makes it obvious that the answer is to defy these laws, not to go over them with a fine-toothed comb with highly paid union lawyers to find a sneaky little opening. The reality is that the bosses want unions to heel so they can pay workers peanuts. If the contemporary union movement keeps playing the bosses' games, it won't be able to organise its way out of its own grave before too long.

Anti-union laws mean unions screw workers so bosses don't have to

There was a distribution centre strike at MLDC back in 2015 called by the workers themselves after bosses broke part of their EBA in saying all new hires would be from labour hire companies. Other warehouses joined them in solidarity. The strike action outlasted threats of fines and dismissal and an order from the Fair Work commission. Workers burned the Fair Work order and restated their demands. No labour hire, and no repercussions for striking. The National Union of Workers (NUW) marched down to the un-authorised picket and tried to shut it down, convincing workers the only way to avoid '\$10,000 fines and jail time' was to authorise leadership to meet with bosses and cut a deal. The deal the union struck banned the right to strike, in direct contradiction of the workers stated demands, and the union agreed with the bosses that an independent investigator would be instated to facilitate retributive action against the three workers that instigated the strike. **The union didn't want to risk repercussions and sold the workers out to save itself, to the point of collaborating with the bosses. The workers were pressured to take the deal despite the disapproval of a minority of militants involved.**

The MLDC strike proves the function of anti-union laws to incentivise union bureaucrats to turn against workers to save themselves. Still, the strike showed the kind of militancy that Anarchists argue for. Militancy for us means defying bosses, bad laws and, if

necessary, union leadership to exercise workers power. Power built on the rank and file level flows upward into stronger unions and more accountable leadership. Bosses are a threat from above, pressuring unions to capitulate, and so the workers must be a threat from below, able to embarrass or undermine or even replace unions that refuse to fight for the workers.

How we fight backlash when we break anti-union laws

Since the recent Woolworths strike, two workers have been dismissed and other employees are being investigated for alleged unlawful picketing during the strike action. An UWU spokesperson has issued a statement saying 'United Workers Union is representing members in these matters with the goal of ensuring members are heard and they receive fair outcomes.' No subsequent strike action has been organised to demand the reinstatement of the dismissed workers or an end to the bullying investigations by Woolworths bosses. Time will tell if UWU's representation amounts to anything substantive.

When workers defy anti-union laws, there will be backlash from the state and bosses. Historically power that has been capable of forcing the hands of bosses and the state has also been capable of protecting organisers from such backlash. Builders Labourers used to ensure that contracts guaranteed the re-hiring of lead organisers of previous strikes in order to encourage the leadership of future militants. Tramway Union secretary Clarrie O'Shea was jailed for his refusal to pay fines built up from unprotected industrial action in the 1960's. As a result, twenty-seven unions and up to a million workers undertook a general strike which led to O'Shea's prompt release from prison and ensured the anti-union laws of the time were never used again. We must build toward the same goals today if we want a strong workers' movement that protects those willing to take the necessary risks to push the struggle forward.

\$140 million in losses is substantial for a two week strike. Shutting down our workplaces is clearly a stronger bargaining chip than arbitration or that too would be illegal. Imagine what we

could bargain for if all workers in all industries were prepared to stop work to defy bad laws, coordinate actions and make demands of those in power. As unionists have done in the past, we could win more than wage raises, but a better world altogether.

All unionists and workers need to make a choice, or have it made for you. Continue to fight in rigged fights landing whatever punches you can, or take the gloves off and make unionism a real, lasting threat to the bosses and to any unions that would sell workers short. *Arc Up! Anarchist Communists Red & Black Notes*

Reply

Some points:

1. The fiasco of the Woolworths strike fits the pattern of the 'smoke & mirrors' technique of the corporate unions to assist the employer offensive and Neo Liberal push associated with 'Enterprise Bargaining'. A common feature is the role of certain leftist groups from the Marxist Leninist heritage and others helping usually in not very effective community/workers' picket lines. Victorian Socialists is the electoral front of one of these groups 'Socialist Alternative'. Providing the union bosses with the aid of the corporate media the pretext to isolate the workers on strike and avoid mobilising members of the union across other workplaces to provide industrial solidarity. As the union officials and corporate media focus on the lame duck community picket lines. In the case of the UWU it has overall 140,000 members, with most kept in the dark about the fine details of the strike by the union bosses. Meanwhile the union bosses of other corporate unions head off or sabotage any grass roots moves for industrial solidarity. Any push by workers for effective industrial action during the strike is headed off with talk by the union bosses of fines by the Un-Fair Work Court due to 'illegal' industrial action. Ignoring the role of the corporate union hierarchy in collaborating with various Governments in the imposing of the associated punitive industrial legislation and the enterprise bargaining fraud. With the

strike/campaign set up to fail and vent grass roots frustration. Fake victories are claimed by the union bosses and real defeats for workers are achieved. Only apparent when examining the fine print of the EBA documents requiring industrial lawyers to effectively interpret. (1)

2. The author presents a very a-historical view of bureaucratic unionism. Failing to take account of a major change from bureaucratic reformist unionism to 'corporate unionism' which developed during the ALP/ACTU Accord Hawke/Keating Government period 1983-1995 followed by the 'Unofficial Accord' years. The development of 'corporate unionism' has seen the union hierarchy interwoven with the corporate set up by innumerable threads. In 1984 the AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) was established by the Hawke ALP Govt. as an 'unofficial' part of the Accord. It has been allegedly involved in massive corruption entailing rigging of union elections and EBA ballots by ALP networks in the AEC in association with agencies of the Deep State such as ASIO. Prior to the Accord era certainly union ballot rigging occurred but it was not an alleged full on State agency job. Meanwhile Industry Super funds established as part of the Accord involve union officials directly managing the capitalist economy and fund the union hierarchy via large payments for officials being on Super Boards and using various other pretexts such as so co-sponsorships, etc. Employers also pitch in considerable sums to fund the corporate unions using various pretexts such as funding so called training. Union officials also plunder members' funds for slush funds. The predominant corporate media, legal fraternity together with sundry Governments/state agencies are all heavily involved in the cover-up of the massive rorts in the corporate unions and state agencies. In much of the pre Accord era there was a significant independent alternative media in Australia and forums such as the Sydney Domain speakers' corner

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NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news lately has of course been the success of the Albanese led ALP in the Federal election with an increased majority in Parliament and the weakening of other parties such as the Liberals, Greens, etc. (See article page 2.)

With the Federal electoral circus out of the way, the Albanese Govt. together with other Govts. on the State level, will be under pressure from Big Business, the shadow of the Trump Regime and the squandering of Billions on AUKUS nuke subs for an accelerated 'productivity drive'. Corporate code word for major job cutting, speed ups in jobs and privatisation pushes. A looming focus of this onslaught and flash point of workers' resistance is the NSW Railways. The ASN has been doing the 'hard yards' to assist militants to fight back and meet the bosses' and ALP aligned union bosses' challenge. Particularly associated with the long drawn out Rail EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) negotiations and RTBU campaign circus. (See articles page 3 and 4.)

In Sydney Buses, we look at a worsening speed up in drivers' jobs associated with new rosters. We also focus on some 'monkey business' involving the TWU and RTBU together with a scandal over the procurement of electric buses. (See article page 5.)

In this edition we note the passing away of a supporter of the ASN and RW over many years. John Lee passed away in recent weeks. He had been very helpful with many technical aspects of our set up.

Help Build RW! Your help is sought with its distro. Why not order bulk copies to sell at your local shopping centre on Saturday mornings, leave at the lunch room at work and at your local cafe, library or cinema. Your assistance on the financial plane is also welcome.

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Where we stand:

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

2. We are a revolutionary labour movement that uses as its only means of struggle, direct action in all its forms: occupations. Strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc. We are independent from all reformist and hierarchical unions and political parties, and we are creating an alternative to these and 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 practicing co-operation and mutual aid. We have an equal part in making 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 their struggles.

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

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

TO FIND OUT MORE:

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

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REBEL WORKER
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together with many others which would create a significant obstacle to this brazen cover-up and 'smoke and mirrors' performances of the union officials associated with enterprise bargaining.(2)

3. The author refers to the general strikes and strike wave particularly focusing on public transport and the metal trades in Victoria over the jailing of Clarrie O'Shea. However, these general strikes must be seen in the context of the militant traditions of public transport and metal workers in Victoria, particularly the successful 1946 Victorian rail strike. Another important factor in the launching of the general strikes was the breakaway Melbourne Trades Hall unions associated with the Socialist Left faction of the ALP. Today, the myriad of threads entangling the corporate unions with the corporate and Deep State set up has been associated with the virtual merging of ALP factions in the union hierarchies and the wide spread ultra bureaucratic methods of the corporate union officials. In the pre-Accord era mass union meetings were a common occurrence in many unions. Today where the union officials are forced to hold mass meetings, these gatherings are much more infrequent and often very crudely manipulated. **Today we are in a completely different situation to the era of bureaucratic reformist unionism. In the case of 'corporate unionism' at the top levels there is no 'union'. Its just another dimension of the corporate set up. A relationship involving various tentacles of the ALP octopus reaching into the legal fraternity, real estate industry, union hierarchy,**

corporate media, employers and various components of the State.

4. The author recalls the eruption of a major strike wave movement/General strikes such as over the O'Shea jailing which defeated Industrial Court Penal provisions in 1969. Such recollections and harping back to a romantic militant past are not sufficient. Strategic organising is required now to catalyse the processes of a strike/direct action wave to break out of the Fair Work Court and associated repressive industrial legislation straitjacket. Facilitating the possibility for major syndicalist break aways from the corporate unions and steps toward a mass syndicalist union confederation opposed to the ACTU and all political parties in the context of greatly raised morale of workers. In the case of a much larger strike wave, general strike involving 10 million workers and associated factory, school and uni occupations during May 1968 in France, there is evidence of strategic industrial organising in its lead up. **Particularly the activity of the 'Socialism or Barbarism' group in the 1950's. It assisted the publication from the early 1950's of a bulletin by militant workers at the largest factory in France, Renault Billancourt in Paris employing 30,000 workers. It was also a key stronghold of the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) controlled by the Communist Party. In the late 1950's, this paper encouraged and linked up with other such papers in other factories/firms in France, creating an anti-Stalinist/union hierarchy pole of attraction in important work places.** (3) During May 1968, this workplace organisation played a key role in the

spread of the strike wave.

In the case of Drivers for Affirmative Action Group during early March 2004 involving 600 train drivers, it waged a 'work to rule' campaign in the NSW Railways for 4 days. It was the very early stages of a possible strike wave/direct action movement with similarities to the early phases of the public sector strike waves in France during late 1986 early 1987 and December 1995. The initiator and spokesman of the group was involved in the Sparks (transport paper) network and was associated with long term ASN assistance to militants' activity and an important victory against privatisation in the sector. Sparks has a key role in transport today in facilitating a strike/direct action wave movement together with Rebel Worker assisting syndicalist education and networking of militants in other industries and the spread of a strike/direct action wave across industry.

M.

Notes

1. See 'Spotlight on Rorts in the Union Office' in RW Vol.36 No.2(231) Aug.-Sept. 2011; 'Industry Super Fees: A Bonanza for Unions', The Australian 17/3/21 and See 'RTBU Elections 2018: Were They Rigged?' in RW Dec.2018 Jan. 2019 Vol.36 No.3 (223) on www.rebelworker.org
2. See 'From Corporate Bureaucratic Unionism to Grass Roots controlled Direct Action unionism: Perspectives for Activity & Strategy for Australia, Today,' in RW Vol.41 No.3 (235) Dec. 2023-Jan.2024
3. See Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group by M. Linden from Left History 5.1 (1997)