

# REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

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## FRENCH WORKERS' SHOW THE WAY FORWARD TO FIGHT AUSTERITY!



Scuffle with police during recent protest in Paris over draconian changes to labour laws.

**FEDERAL ELECTION; NSW RAILWAY NEWS; STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS; BRITAIN TODAY; FRENCH LABOUR PROTESTS; BELGIUM WORKERS FIGHT AUSTERITY; CHINESE RAIL NEWS; MEXICO; RUSSIA; BOOK REVIEW CORNER; OBITUARY: JACK GRANCHAROFF; NEWS & NOTES;**

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

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

Comments are welcome.

REBEL WORKER

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## National News

### THE FEDERAL ELECTION

The Australian Federal election campaign grinded on and finally was completed, with most people being heartily sick of the whole thing. Neither the Liberals nor Labor are trusted by most voters and the major parties are horrified at the drift of voters to minor parties of all stripes. Anarchists have something to say about this, something deeper than just advising people about voting. We say if you're looking to fix the problems in society, Parliament is the wrong place.

Real power in a capitalist society doesn't reside in Parliament, but in the boardrooms of the major companies, in the editorial rooms of the mainstream media, in the officers' mess of the military, in the courts and in the offices of top public service mandarins. Even if a government reflecting the electorate's opinions came to office, it would be hamstrung by the power of society's real rulers. It would be

unable to implement its program and the results of its legislation would be contrary to expectations. There is no Parliamentary road to a just society.

And what's on offer anyway? Exhibit One is the Liberal Party, the open mouthpiece of Big Business and advocate for capitalism itself. Its actions of the last few years speak for themselves the Liberal politicians replaced Tony Abbott with Malcolm Turnbull purely because they needed a better salesperson.

**Exhibit Two is the Labor Party. This cowardly bunch is far more committed to occupying the Treasury benches than standing up for their supporters. They want to govern capitalism far more than they want to change it. Over time, they have become the neo-liberals they once denounced, because capitalism demands a neo-liberal policy framework. If they have the misfortune to win office it will be their allotted task to kick Labor voters where it hurts, all the while arguing that the Libs would kick harder. Don't say you weren't warned.**

Exhibit Three is The Greens. If this mob ever offered a real alternative to the major parties, they gave that up the day they decided to tackle global warming by putting a price on carbon. Their intention to tackle climate change is not in doubt, but they ignore the way carbon pricing would make working class people pay and how this would drive workers into the arms of climate deniers and the coal mining bosses. Their carbon price flows from their belief that a just and sustainable capitalism is possible. Greens members are not advised to go shopping for used cars on their own.

Let's leave aside the assorted Right Wing Nut Jobs (pausing only to note that they range from religious bigots to bona fide Fascists) and the plethora of middle-of-the-road to mildly progressive single issue groups listing them would send readers to sleep. Their grievances and causes, to the extent to which they are legitimate, will bog

down in direct proportion to their significance to the operations of capitalism. If it would stop the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, it would have Buckley's chance of being implemented. Finally, the Nick Xenophon Team presents a moderate image even while they peddle protectionism and uphold Australia's imperialist military build-up.

What about the various Socialist parties running in selected electorates and some Senate races? No, there's still no Parliamentary road for them. While it's no crime to enter Parliament in order to oppose every capitalist government consistently, refusing them confidence and blocking attacks on the working class, the campaign necessary to get there is a massive waste of time and effort. Any opponent of capitalism would get a better reward for their efforts by building a working class movement in workplaces and communities, rather than entering a forum where the rules are rigged against us.

**Whoever wins this election will find a global economy which is stagnating and threatening to spin completely out of control, while international events are both breaking up the European Union and building towards a conflict between the United States and China. Parliament, necessarily focused on the national arena, cannot solve these questions. Under pressure from uncontrollable global events, it will inevitably attack the working class to solve the problems of capitalism in Australia. Removing the capitalists from power is necessary, but Lucy Parsons was right when she said:**

"Never be deceived that the rich will allow you to vote away their wealth."

WORKERS' REVOLUTION IS THE ANSWER

Thanks to MACG

*STOP PRESS: The Turnbull Liberal Government looks to have regained power with the support of some Independents.*

### ASN APPEAL

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

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



# N.S.W. RAILWAYS NEWS

## The Ghost (Union) in the Machine

For many employees in the public transport industry getting things resolved through the union has become almost impossible. Sure many of the issues that pass by the Leadership seem trivial when compared to the big picture. However, for people at the shop floor level the issues that are often dismissed are not trivial but instead have a significant impact on their lives.

Take for instance the removal of the control rooms on the country platforms at Central. Not really a big issue you might think, especially if you don't work there.

Management will use the removal of the Control Rooms to get rid of some employees who work there. Mostly these are older workers who have great experience in supplying information to customers and assisting boarding of passengers who are either not fully fit or have some type of disability. Their contribution is significant in ensuring the smooth running of services and providing appreciated assistance to passengers. Management has a different vision for a younger eager-looking workforce that is subservient and glad just to have a job.

What is proposed is that current rail staff be forced to stand on the platform for a full shift giving "Customer Service" by answering a continuous flow of questions from the public. From a business point of view it may seem like a good idea. However from the point of view of employees this is a change in working conditions which will cause them much hardship.

There was no consultation over these changed working conditions at shop floor level, although there would have had to have been some consultation with the union hierarchy even if this was not passed on. Now the Pods replacing Control Rooms have been rolled-out sequentially across the network despite the protestations of staff on individual stations.

For the employees working on platforms 1 to 15, as on other stations, prolonged standing will have many adverse health effects which have been documented continuously by us and is internationally recognised as having significant health repercussions. Some of the more significant health problems include:

Fatigue

Leg and foot pain, including knee and hip pain

Varicose veins

Back and neck pain

Headache

Elevated blood pressure

An increase in cardiovascular disease

Continuous shift-work exacerbates these effects. They are well recognised by leading workplace health experts around the globe, but not by senior Transport N.S.W. managers.

**Compounding these health conditions will be the removal of shelter when the Control Rooms are taken away. On cold chilly mornings, late at night or on windy days staff will be fully exposed to the weather while their managers are tucked up in their beds and lounge rooms.**

As we already know, Central Station is one of the most violent precincts in the



C.B.D., where serious assaults, robberies, fights and stabbings are a regular occurrence. These crimes often happen late at night when few people, including the police, are within the vicinity. Although these crimes can happen at any time of the day. The Control Rooms in this instance become a refuge for rail workers who can lock themselves in when confronted with a violent individual or group. This has happened on many occasions. Where do staff retreat now that the Control Rooms have been removed? What of the Transport Policy on Safety and Violence in the Workplace which states that employees must withdraw from potentially violent and abusive situations?

On many occasions various staff have appealed to their union to intervene in the dispute with management over the removal of the Control Rooms. They have been prepared to do much of the leg work and organising themselves, with backing from the union leadership of course. The union attended at least one of the meetings involving staff and management but did not intervene on behalf of workers. Most rail workers at the site believe that the union may be complicit in the decision to remove the Control Rooms. Passivity in the eyes of union members is complicity.

Instead of support for the struggle from the union leadership workers have been told that their best bet would be to bring the dispute to the attention of WorkCover. That's the extent of union support. Judging that WorkCover is a toothless tiger the chances of escalating the dispute with them is almost nil. Management would be likely to trot out their "Risk Assessment" and wave it in front of a WorkCover officer who

would then reassure management they have complied with the statutory requirements.

The same situation arose over prolonged standing at the ticket barriers where staff are still upset with the lack of support from the union on that OH&S issue. On that occasion the union was complicit in signing off the risk assessment. WorkCover did not want to concern itself despite several people suffering pain on a daily basis and a couple of resignations because it made life just too unbearable.

**This is an industrial issue for which the union has absolved itself. Unions have the power to intervene in Health and**

**Safety issues anyway. By electing not to act in favour of their members they paint a picture of a union not interested in members affairs, a union that is reluctant to take on the bosses for whatever reason.**

Meanwhile the Union Executive has been out on the hustings campaigning for the A.L.P. They simply exist as an arm of the Labor Party, supplying funds and labour power to aid and abet their agenda. Everything else is subordinated to that task.

That's why we must break the nexus between our union and political parties. That means finally ridding ourselves of the so

called self serving political opportunists in the union that take us for granted. They can bend over backwards for the ALP but when it comes time to ask for help from the union bosses the reply is never forthcoming.

**That's why a Rank and File movement in the workplace is so important. Members Voice has tried to carry out that role by running in elections and challenging the lack of action by our union officials. However we are only as good as the people who see the importance of a rank and file movement and those that chose to support such a project.**

In the lead up to the next EBA we will need to be on our toes. The Liberals privatisation agenda will be high on the agenda of any proposal they put before us. For that we need a fighting union, one that is prepared to act when the time comes. One that takes heed of the wishes of its members, one that keeps members informed with truths instead of half lies and one that takes members into the struggle for their own benefit and future.

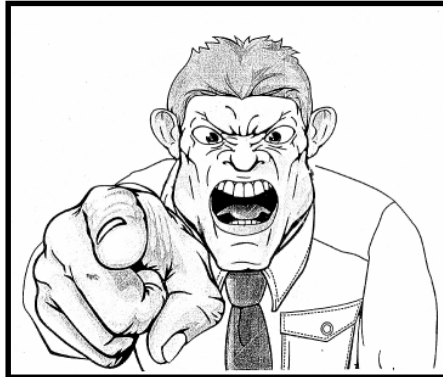
## To all the Bosses' Bullies

**The public transport system has produced bullies by the dozen. (there are some good people too)**

But here I write about the ladder climbers that have no real skill except that which they wield when misusing their authority and bullying their fellow workers. It makes them feel superior for a few moments, because they are inadequate most of the time.

**You all know who you are. You're the one who thinks that he/she is better than his fellow worker. You pick on people from non English speaking backgrounds because they are less able to defend themselves. You pick on and abuse older workers because they can't keep up or because they aren't intimidated by you. New young workers are also targeted by you because you think that in the boss's eyes you will get a promotion or keep your job for instilling fear and discipline.**

You write bullshit reports about staff, some that are favourable for people who toady up to you and snigger about other staff. Other reports are unfavourable just



because that person defends himself/herself from you or avoids you like the plague. You are a blight on our industry

just like some of the managers that protect you. Bully, you are the boss's pet, the bosses pimp, nothing more. The lowest form of humanity.

**We have no time for you snitching rats, inconsequential Leaders, Duty Managers, or Supervisors. If senior managers are unwilling to curb your abhorrent behaviour then we will take the law into our own hands.**

In N.S.W. and Nationally there are laws that protect us from your abuse. Bullying is a crime.

**We are going to make sure that staff know their rights and raise these issues with us. We aim to come after you each and every time you overstep the bounds of decency.**

**Members Voice would be pleased to know about any attempts at bullying in your workplace.**

Sparks Contact Address: PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW and via Web Site [www.sparksweb.org](http://www.sparksweb.org)

## TOWN HALL STATION NEWS

### SYDNEY TRAINS "MONKEY BUSINESS"

Dear RW

I was injured at Town Hall station on 25/11/2011 at 1.36am. My manager Ralph Hoffman visited me the next day in hospital. He said as soon as the CCTV footage was available he would show it to me. Two days later Ralph visited me again, he told me he should be going to my funeral not visiting me in hospital. He told me the footage showed that I had tripped a bucket and fallen so that my neck was heading for the outer rail. At the last

minute my body twisted with my shoulder taking the hit not my neck. When I asked to see the film, Ralph said the management of Rail Corp had decided that it was not in my best interests to see it.

I returned to work on January 2012 on reduced hours. At work I spoke to the person who was working with me on the night of the accident. He recalled that he had heard me scream turned around and saw me flying thru the air not falling but flying just like superman, with my arms out stretched and my body travelling parallel to the platform. Hearing this I approached Ralph with my union official and demanded to see the film, Ralph said the film was

locked and bolted and I would never see it. Several months later I was contacted by telephone by a person who introduced himself as a Private Investigator hired by Rail Corp, he wanted to ask me some questions about the accident. I told him to meet me the following day with the film he agreed to do so. We met the next day I had my union official with me. **The investigator wanted to ask me some questions about the accident and sign some documents. I said show me the film, he said the film had been held up in the system, just sign the documents and he would come back later with the film. I said come back later with the film and then I will sign the documents. The investigator said he would be back the following week with the film. I never saw or heard from him again.**

Being very suspicious by now I contacted G.I.P.A.(Rail Corp run and control their

own G.I.P.A this is a big part of the problem). The film I saw was in good condition everything was clear and crisp. Ann Gibson who showed me the film was very helpful, she showed the film frame by frame. You could see my feet leaving the ground, the top of my left foot hitting the top of the bucket knocking it over, not tripping on the bucket as stated by Ralph Hoffman had happened. I flew a short distance after passing the edge of the platform and I was heading for the rail. I was amazed at the speed I was travelling. At the last moment my body twisted with my shoulder taking the hit.

**When I rang G.I.P.A. to see the film for a second time they asked me if I was bringing anyone with me I told them I was (this seemed a bit strange to me). When I saw the film a second time it was not the same, the picture quality was Low it was a clumsy attempt to pass off a deceptive copy as the original. When I said to the computer operator, "it's not the same film", she said it was the only one they had. I wanted to see the film, frame by frame, Jenny told me they could not do that, when I explained Ann Gibson had done exactly that. Jenny replied Ann has taken redundancy.**

I contacted my local member Mr Zangari, he helped me with a letter which he personally handed to Gladys Berejiklian the Minister for Transport at the time. Many months and phone calls later, I finally re-

ceived a reply where she did not answer the question of the deceptive copy of the film. Mr Zangari presented the copy to the minister on another two occasions where she still would not answer the questions I



*Sydney Trains manager handling the enquiry of a Town Hall Station worker about film footage of his workplace accident which has been "lost".*

put to her. Instead I received a letter from Mr Larry McGrath saying that the Minister thanked me for bringing this matter to her attention. **Mr McGrath also stated that he would investigate and get back to me. I received no further correspondence from Mr. McGrath and every effort to contact him was futile. I sent an email to the conduct and performance unit of Rail Corp stating my case. Several weeks later I was contacted by a**

**man who did not give me his name, saying he was from conduct and performance and that he had contacted G.I.P.A. and he was told that they had lost the film, so he could do no more and he promptly hang up. So I contacted Human Resources from Rail Corp. They told me a Letter would be sent to me I received nothing.**

On two separate occasions, Rail Corp have tried to dismiss me. I beat them on both occasions and finally left under my own steam, a couple of months ago. I want an apology from the then Minister of Transport for the anguish I have been put thru and the failure to investigate and address the deceptive behaviour of Rail Corp. I have been told by a reliable source that the CCTV films are transferred to a hard drive so I want a copy of the incident involving me.

**This also exposes that Rail Corp(Sydney Trains) must not have its own internal G.I.P.A. or its own conduct and performance unit. How many other people have been treated the same as I have? I do not think this an isolated case. I am amazed and shocked that a government department can act this way and seemingly with the full knowledge of the Minister. Any help you can give me would greatly appreciated I am only asking for the truth to be told.**

Yours sincerely

Garry Radford

## STATE TRANSIT NEWSFLASH

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

**RW: What are your views on the Light Rail extensions?**

WB: It's a disaster so far. We have seen no major construction past the QVB. It seems the Govt has told the companies doing the job to take as long as they want as the money is there to pay them. Lately we have seen how ruthless the Baird and Turnbull Governments are in regard to the project. The Baird Govt. has ignored local community protests concerning the destruction of trees along Anzac Parade and proceeded with the tree culling. Increasingly trees on the nature strip along the Kensington stretch of Anzac Parade are also being removed. Whilst both Governments have completely disregarded the aboriginal archaeological site on the way to where the Light Rail yard is to be located and just went ahead and demolished it. On the basis

of public transport requirements there seems to me absolutely no need for the Light Rail in this area. As there already exists efficient bus services, particularly in regard to meeting UNSW commuter needs. **With the Light Rail commuters and motorists may even be worse off. What will happen in the event of a tram breaking down on a line? It will block all other trams on the line and create tremendous traffic chaos, particularly at peak hour.**

In a recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald 18/5/16 "Baird Light Rail is progress done badly", some interesting new information has been provided about the project. The trams will be extremely long. Measuring 67 metres equalling 4 bus lengths and will run very fast at 70 kmph. The trams are also quite heavy, weighing 31 tonnes. Whilst only 30% of passengers on board will have seats. Overall 6,900 passengers per direction will be carried per hour much less than the almost 16,000 car-

ried per hour by 220 buses. There will 12 km's of track with only 20 stops with half within 2.5 km of Central and the rest will average one a kilometre. Many of the stops will be adjacent to public housing projects such as in Daceyville or public owned land, which is being targeted for privatisation and the construction of high rises. The Light Rail is likely to extend down to East Gardens where other public land is being targeted for sub division and high rises. **The Light Rail extensions look to be apart from a pretext for the selloff of Govt owned land for developments, a fast transit system for the new high rise residents. It's like all Baird Govt. projects in NSW – providing work for mates and a gold mine for real estate developers.** Everything else is facade. The large size and speed of the trams will create difficulties for pedestrians in the inner city and suburbs crossing streets.

**RW: What have been other ramifications of the Light Rail extensions?**

WB: Associated with it there has been major changes to many of our runs. Only the 333 and 380 from Waverley depot are still going to the Quay. Whilst the 311, 324, 325, and 389 which are cross city runs are



heading past the two Casinos. I believe these are permanent fixtures and a way the Baird Govt. is using State Transit to give a helping hand to Packer's Treasure Island and the Crown Jewel Casino. 326, 327 and 323 which used to go to the City are going now from Edgecliff via Bondi Junction and terminating back at Edgecliff.

**RW: What is the latest with the proposed Waterloo high rise developments?**

WB: In the case of the Waterloo high rises, it's estimated that 73,000 people will be crowded into the area, similar in density to Hong Kong. The new developments in the area are likely to contribute to major traffic congestion, resulting in diversions and changes to bus routes. Particularly the 308 will be affected.

**RW: What are your impressions of the Baird Govt's planning and implementation of its projects?**

WB: It gives the impression that it is consulting with local residents regarding various developments, but in reality the Govt. has already approved the projects, and just goes through the motions of consulting with residents. It's already a done deal. It has even turned a blind eye to James Packer illegally purchasing public land adjacent to his Barangaroo Casino. Recently I was speaking to a former queue conductor who attended a community consultation meeting regarding the Power House Museum. He mentioned that he attended a local meeting on the issue and noticed local residents were only given 30 seconds each to ask questions. **There seems little in the way of major protest action by communities to fight the Baird onslaught. One possible reason is the extensive character of Baird's ravages, and there is no obvious major aspect to focus upon. Whilst, Baird's council merger policy has been a clever tactic to crush opposition to the WESTCONNEX tollway. Already a number of councils in the inner west which have opposed this development have been closed down as part of the mergers and replaced with Baird Govt. loyalists.**

In regard to planning, the Govt has drawn up a ludicrous 40 year plan for Sydney. Despite, most business analysts looking at the most 5 years ahead. Whilst the basic thrust of Baird Govt. projects is short term profit gains for its business mates in real estate development and associated industries. When the Govt. should be focusing on major expenditure and projects to tackle climate change and its ramifications.

**RW: What is the latest with management?**

WB: Lately there have been many changes going on. The former Waverley

Depot manager, Big Jim has been transferred to Ryde. According to unconfirmed reports, a likely scenario is that after 6 months in the job, he will replace Peter Rowley, as CEO. With the new boss at the depot, people are feeling uncertainty in regard to their jobs. Whilst Madam Lash remains at Randwick still cracking her whip. Rowley has recently issued us with a new memo. Again like the last memo he issued two years ago, it's seems a desperate call to intimidate us to further boost productiv-



ity. Why is he doing this? Is it to save his neck from the swinging axe of Transport for NSW bureaucrats?

**RW: What is happening with drivers at the depot?**

WB: I am constantly noticing a high turnover. The STA can't get enough drivers. They are constantly training up new drivers. Lately, the bosses seem to be realising that the draconian discipline regime, resulting in not just the sacking of drivers not suited, but also those dedicated to the job is costing too much money. **As a result, they are starting to compromise on the harsh draconian discipline regime. An area where the bosses are still waving the big stick is in regard to accidents.** Their focus on this issue could help us in regard to pinpointing a problem with our driving. However, there seems to be a sting in the tail. With the bosses being able to jump on us over minor issues such as knocking a mirror and then requiring 1/2 day retraining, they are creating a mechanism for setting us up for the sack later down the road. Years ago, the bosses wouldn't have held such minor mishaps against you. Now it's a different story. Some people find this pressure too great and a lot feel intimidated with their accident record hanging over them. Consequently, many feel demoralised and some leave the job.

**RW: What is the situation with the uniform?**

WB: Latest news is that we are being issued with a new one. The proposed new uniform has been displayed on depot notice boards. It looks to be nylon and quite cheaply made and poor quality. Like the last one, the uniform would be made by workers in places like India or Bangladesh on low wages and 12 hour shifts. Unlike the current uniform which we had to order

on-line and were given \$300 to purchase it, the new one will be issued to us for free. Hopefully, we'll have no problems with the supply of the uniform components. As the supply of the current uniform was a shambles, with some drivers getting oversized clothes. Whilst others had clothes missing.

**RW: What are the latest developments with depot closures?**

WB: Apart from the planned closure of Randwick depot and selloff of the land for apartment developments, according to an unconfirmed report Nth Sydney depot is also to be closed and the land sold off. There is also an interesting situation in regard to the private company Forestway. I have received information that the company is ceasing its runs on the Nth. Shore, as it now only wants to do charters. Why it is pulling out from the runs is unclear. No doubt the Government will have to intervene and the STA will take over the runs.

**RW: How is the mechanical section faring?**

WB: There is an urgent need for more mechanical staff at all the depots. Passengers have mentioned to me that the buses are always breaking down. Whilst I have heard on many occasions, a racket from likely significant mechanical problems on my

buses. Lately the radios in the buses are being upgraded. However vital mechanical maintenance is being neglected. The mechanics are all great guys but the Baird

Govt. and the STA is letting down the passengers and drivers. It looks to be all about

the Baird Govt. looking good and not looking bad with the NSW Budget, which seems timed to help the Liberals fortunes in the Federal Elections.

## Victorian Railway News

**In this issue of RW we will discuss the misadventures of V/Line, which has led to the resignation of the Chief Executive. Drivers, conductors and staff from Head Office will discuss the issues. Once again names have been changed.**

**RW: Why did the Chief Executive resign?**

Clarence: It is alleged that he resigned before he was sacked. You see the Velocity Trains were having wheel trouble. This was first noticed late last year.

**RW: A description of the wheel issue was reported in the March issue of Digest. We will discuss the stress placed on V/Line employees.**

Penrod: No daily paid employee knew what was happening until it was noticed that Velocity Trains were being parked in sidings, and trains being replaced by

**all spin. Management expected the conductors to solve the problems on the trains. If they make a mistake, they have to front Human Resources.**

**RW: I hear there is another problem.**

Roscoe: Correct. A Velocity Train failed to activate a level crossing and Metro Trains banned Velocity Trains from their network.

Penrod: This caused chaos on the V/Line network over a weekend with Velocity trains being terminated at outlying stations with passengers transferred to Metro Trains to continue their journeys.

**Rastus: Top level discussions were held over the weekend and as a result Velocity Trains were restored on all lines, except the Traralgon services on which all Velocity trains were replaced by buses.**

Roscoe: Locomotive trains were not affected and these trains run as normal and

Penelope: By the third week of January, commuter anger intensified with country Members of Parliament contacting the Minister of Transport, asking when the problem was to be solved.

**Ichabod: At the end of January a new timetable was to be introduced which was to have extra trains. It was alleged the Chief Executive said to the Minister of Transport, the problem would be fixed. At the same time the Minister announced there would be free travel for the remainder of January over the V/Line network to compensate for the missing trains.**

Isabel: As a result of the free travel a large number of people travelled on V/Line and a huge number of buses were needed.

**RW: Think of the cost to tax payers.**

Penelope: The timetable changes for January were quietly deferred and the Chief Executive was summoned to face the Minister.

Penrod: You see, he said to the Minister, the problem would be solved but when it became known the trains would be off the road for up to six months, there was a heated discussion with the Minister and as a result the Chief Executive resigned.

**Rastus and Roscoe: As soon as his resignation was known, the drivers in the meal room at Southern Cross, cheered. As one driver was heard to say, "Good riddance to the Bastard!"**

Penrod: You say good riddance but V/Line employees hated him.

Rastus: You see he was appointed as Chief Executive to V/Line by the previous Liberal Government with one ambition. Prepare V/line for Privatisation.

Sheona: During the four years of Liberal Rule, seventy nine million dollars were removed from the V/Line Budget.

**Roscoe: After his resignation, free travel was extended for another week, at the end of this time an interim timetable was introduced and if a train listed in this timetable was replaced by a bus, you travelled for free. Ticket holders were reimbursed.**

Isabel: One of the downsides of this timetable was that certain trains were replaced by buses. These trains were the first trains in the morning.

Penrod: A number of workers use these trains and if late to work because of late arrival, these employees are docked or would lose their jobs.



buses. There was no set planning and trains being replaced by buses at random. Conductors and station staff were being abused and some employees were being threatened with violence.

Isabel: One train which is usually a six car velocity was cut to three cars, due to the shortage. The train was overcrowded and the conductor was unable to check tickets.

**Penelope: Management will not support employees in times of trouble. They gave the conductors a printed message to read over the public address. It was**

Seymour lines were run as normal. Seymour trains were operated by Sprinters.

Rastus: Velocity trains have run for ten years over these boom barriers in the suburban area, yet all of a sudden this problem arises.

**RW: Why?**

Rastus and Roscoe: Drivers have heard rumours that when the electrified network was upgraded, the boom barriers were not upgraded and are thus running on the old electrical circuits. We cannot confirm this rumour.

Sheona: The planners would not care. They only think of operational convenience.

**Rastus: We Drivers work trains to Newport Workshops and at Newport there are a number of locomotive services carriages in storage.**

**Dexter: These carriages are awaiting parts. Due to budget cuts some have been in storage for over two years. It is a problem with the wheels and V/line had to work to the allocated budget.**

Penrod: One of the results of this shortage of carriages is some trains run as three carriage trains, resulting in severe overcrowding, while four car trains are used on the least used services.

Penelope: You see the trains run to a carriage program and it is too much to draw up a revised plan.

**RW: What about privatisation?**

Sheona: It was planned to privatise V/Line if the Liberals were returned, but with the election of a Labor Government, most employee assumed he was on borrowed time. We hoped his contract was not renewed.

Rastus: He may have gone, but his lackeys are still there.

**RW: Once again, we have run out of space. We hope, when a new Chief Executive is appointed, he will make V/line a better working environment.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final word, morale is low at V/line and with this Bastard gone, we hope morale is restored. It maybe never. As for the Chief Executive – Good Riddance.

## BRITAIN TODAY

### BREXIT

*Analysis of the UK EU referendum result, how it came about and how the working class standing up for itself has been squeezed off the agenda completely.*

**The British referendum on the EU may be over but the debate still rages. Let's just get one thing out of the way first. Nowhere in the UK has the working class anything to gain from Brexit and "Remain" equally meant nothing to a class already suffering the pain of austerity.** A vote for either is a vote to give the national capital a blank cheque for more austerity. Britain is "divided" all right, but the division is not between London and the provinces, England and Scotland or young and old. The real divide is between those who want to boost their profits and those who pay for this in lower wages, precarious jobs and generally lower living standards. All those campaigning in the referendum (whatever their claims for Remain or Leave) were campaigning on the nationalist and capitalist agenda of "what's best for Britain?" As we wrote back in November

**"Our position as Internationalist Communists is crystal clear. The real choice for workers is to act in our own interests. Don't be drawn into the bosses' phoney debate".[1]**

We will return to the referendum and the working class later but for the moment it is clear that the dust has not yet settled on the consequences of the Brexit vote. Cameron's resignation without invoking Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon has opened up a period of uncertainty. This means that the consequences of the vote look like being long-term and drawn out for not only Britain and Europe but also

the wider global capitalist world. Undoubtedly the key imperialist players - including UK, US, French, German states and respective national/transnational firms - will use the time to find a solution that best matches their separate and common interests.

The first question we have to address is how did the British ruling class let it happen at all.

It's not the first time in history that a ruling class when faced with a growing political and economic crisis has let short-term political expediency get in the way of its longer term strategic interests and then regretted it. The classic case is perhaps the decision of the Tsarist state in 1904, beset by rural riots and waves of political strikes to opt for the distraction of a "short victorious war" as the Minister of the Interior Plehve put it. So they picked a fight with those "little brown monkeys" (Nicholas II) in Japan only to find that Japan was light years ahead in technology and the ensuing war, though "short" was anything but "victorious". Worse still its immediate consequence was the very increase of social unrest which the regime had been trying to avoid and which almost overthrew Tsarism in 1905. The 1905 Revolution gave the world "soviets" or workers' councils and paved the way not only for the fall of Tsarism but also for the October Revolution of 1917.

**The consequences of Brexit for the British capitalist class might not be quite so dramatic (we can dream) but the same short term calculation by the Conservative Party leaders has massively backfired in the face of the referendum vote that they allowed. Although the British bourgeoisie has long been divided over belonging to the EU its rather contradictory evolution has largely been in the direction that most British capitalists are happy with. The British have been in Europe for what they can get eco-**

**nomically from it but don't like any of the schemes for further supra-national integration which some European politicians openly espouse. However Britain had opted out of almost all the important EU policy areas: the euro; the Schengen zone of passport-free travel; justice and home affairs; and the charter of fundamental rights.**

Economically for British capitalism it made no sense at this point to withdraw from a union which in general brought it more benefits than costs. The access to the world's biggest market brought in direct investment from Japan, the US, China, Thailand etc. If it were not for the fact that the UK was their entry point into the EU these firms would not be here (as Nissan workers were told by their Japanese bosses). 45% of UK exports go to the EU as a result. The journals that tend to represent the mainstream of the capitalist class (the Economist and Financial Times) constantly warned that an "Out" vote would be an economic disaster for the UK and for the rest of Europe, a position echoed by the vast majority of economists and most of big business. In short the British ruling class had the kind of relationship with the EU that they wanted so the question that screams out is why would the British bourgeoisie's favourite party want to risk that in the unpredictable lottery of a popular vote?

**In fact the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the British to push the agenda for "broadening" (rather than deepening) the EU in to Eastern Europe. Broadening meant that with 28 members any schemes for further integration would have great difficulty in passing.**

None of this matters to the UK's anti-Europeans. There has always been a strain of thinking (and not just in the Conservative Party) that for the UK to enter the EU (or EEC as it was at the time) was always a bit demeaning. After all the British Empire once covered a quarter of the world's land area and "we" were on the winning side in two devastating world wars. They remember the time when Brit-



ish foreign policy was based on standing up (with carefully chosen European allies it has to be said) against the potentially dominant power in Europe throughout history whether it was Napoleon's France, Nicholas I's Russia or the Germans' Kaiser and Fuhrer. What these little Englanders don't get is that the fighting of those two world wars drained the UK economy and in the end undermined its imperialist domination. The British Empire was sold off to the USA which, even now, dominates the world with a new form of colonialism (which did not involve the costly occupation of much territory). Despite the never-ending propaganda about the "special relationship" the US extracted a high price in terms of handing over assets for its loans in both wars.

**Nostalgia for empire really does form the background to the die-hard eurosceptics mentality but they are also fighting other battles from the past. What scared them in the 1980s was the ambitions of Jacques Delors to deepen European integration and create a "social Europe". They in fact see themselves as true heirs of Thatcher in that they don't much like state regulation of the economy in any shape or form. Whilst they see the EU as a failing institution they also fear any proposals currently being discussed to make the EU more accountable or "democratic".** The report of the Presidents of the 5 main EU bodies, published in June 2015, calls for reforms towards economic, financial, fiscal and political union. This is to be achieved in two stages the first to be completed by 2017 and the second by 2025. The report argues that unless these reforms are implemented the EU may not survive the next crisis, the outcome which the Brexiteers want above all. **More powerful in the Conservative Party than in the ruling class as a whole, they became a serious problem for the party leadership once the UK Independence Party (UKIP) began to win more votes. The threat that Tory supporters would defect to UKIP before the next general election was a real one. So offering a referendum "in the next parliament" seemed the best way to hold the party together in the coalition with the pro-European Liberal Democrats.** It was clearly in the minds of Osborne and Cameron that they would not get a majority in 2015 so they expected that the promise would not have to be acted upon. In the meantime it kept the party together and limited the defections to UKIP (which got only 1 MP in the 2015 election). However Labour's electoral meltdown in Scotland brought the Tories narrowly to power without their Liberal Democrat allies.

Thus, despite even most Tory MPs being against a "Brexit" Cameron was still left with nothing other than to go ahead with the promised referendum.

Even here the incompetence and arrogance of Cameron's strategy was unbelievable. No attempt was made to stipulate that for a massive constitutional change such as leaving the EU a two thirds or clear majority would be required, as is done in most other countries. "Lucky Dave" got away without such a stipulation in the Scottish referendum so why not in a UK one? And then there was the timing. It has been quite clear since the global financial meltdown of 2008 that Project Europe has run into all kinds of problems from the euro crisis through the Ukraine war to the refugee crisis in Syria, which has been

nastiest on record (culminating in the murder of a Labour "Remain" MP by a white supremacist and British nationalist) and which still goes on.

**Behind this political cock-up by arrogant Tories however there lies a number of deeper issues about the current political and economic hegemony of capitalism. In the first place it is part of a wider phenomenon of the traditional ruling class losing its grip everywhere. In turn this is due to the fact that capitalism is in an economic dead-end. The fact that a UK exit from Europe is possible now is symptomatic of the general global crisis of a system that is economically stagnant. The end of the speculative bubble in 2007-8 has only revealed that the apparent growth of the previous two de-**



*Anti Brexit Rally in London's Parliament Square*

grist to the racist mill of UKIP and the Tory Right. Everything pointed to a need to delay any referendum as long as possible. **However with a majority of only 12 in the House of Commons and a stagnant economy (despite all their boasts) the Tory leadership decided that they would try to lance the eurosceptic boil before it festered further. Cameron thus called the election for June 23 and set off for Brussels to "renegotiate" the UK's position in the EU in February. His special deal from the European Council allowed the UK to dock in-work benefits to EU citizens (most EU citizens in the UK never claim them) and absolved the UK from the goal of political integration and "ever closer union".** It was too little for the euro-sceptics in his own party and the UK was thrown into a dreary campaign which became one of the

**cadec was based on an exponential expansion of debt. In short the future has been mortgaged and the political parties are running out of quick fixes to disguise the current crisis resulting from the reduced profitability of capital. As we have written many times what capitalism really needs is a massive devaluation of capital.** Such devaluations require the destruction of a lot of value – the kind that can only be achieved by a generalised major war amongst the leading imperialist powers. Despite increasing tensions, rivalries and local wars across the planet, all the conditions for this are not yet in place. In the meantime the capitalists have two polices. The first is to bail out the banks (quantitative easing, low or negative interest rates etc) in order to save the financial backbone of the system and stimulate investment. This has not worked as the rate of profit is too low for investment and the funds have gone into speculation. The second is to boost their rate of profit

by making workers work longer hours for less money or to put it technically to acquire more absolute surplus value from the working class.

**Even many capitalist economists see the problem in the way that we pose it (there is much speculation about the next global meltdown in the posh papers). But in a system where the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class via their control of the media they don't focus on such systemic problems.[2] The fault has to lie elsewhere. With a rabid tabloid press headlining and deliberately linking the economic problems of the UK to immigrants[3] and then to the fact that this is due to UK membership of the EU the anti-immigration card was, and is, the key to the victory of the Brexit campaign.** Since Thatcher's time large sectors of the old working class have seen the loss of their better-paid manufacturing jobs as the casual restructuring of the 1980s meant those jobs went abroad where the bosses found cheaper labour costs. Under Blair Labour largely ignored them (attempting to buy them off with benefits) as New Labour sought the middle class vote and pursued identity politics. Then, as a result of the global economic crisis came austerity policies since 2010 which have hit the low paid and vulnerable, a situation which the tabloids are hardly going to dwelling on. Much easier to find someone or something to blame. **The capitalist left blamed it on the banks (rather than on the system as a whole) whilst the right say it's the EU and migration. This is a transparent lie (and Brexit will not solve the problem) but to those who are the victims of the crisis and feel left out by the system it sounds plausible. Generally the working class voted against austerity and the decline in their living standards and this translated into a cross for "leave" on the ballot paper.** Many who had never bothered to vote in the past now turned out to vote against immigration. One unemployed male with a family in Leicester affirmed that he had never voted before and would never vote again. He did not think that anything much would change but "anything is better than what we have now".[4] There is a certain irony in this Brexit alliance between raving free marketers like Farage, Gove and Lawson and the victims of their free market ideologies but that contradictory fact seems to have been the backbone of the vote for "Leave". **Some consequences are already coming home to roost. The SNP leader in Scotland has already called for a new referendum on independence for Scotland (which voted massively for "Remain") and in Northern Ireland (which also voted decisively to "Remain") the Good Friday agreement is being questioned**

**with nationalists calling for a United Ireland once again.** The Protestant heartlands around the North East of Ulster voted for an exit and so once again the community sectarianism is back on the agenda. 2 million plus people at time of writing have signed a petition calling for the referendum to be rerun given that the margin of victory for Brexit was only 1.3 million votes out of 34 million cast. There are precedents for a second referendum when capitalists regard the result as wrong, as in the case of Denmark over the Maastricht treaty and Ireland over the Nice and Lisbon treaties but such a request is unlikely to be granted in the immediate circumstances. At this stage trying such a blatant reversal of a referendum would expose the true charade that is "capitalist democracy".

**In any event the Brexit vote means that the incoherence of the European project has now been further revealed after the earlier eurozone debt disasters and the failure to deal with the migrant crisis. More challenges to Europe on a nationalist basis can now be expected. In economic terms there is much uncertainty and the effects are likely to be more long-term.** However HSBC has already announced that it is moving its Euro operations (and 1000 jobs) to Paris whilst Tata has put a question mark over the saving of steel jobs as it pulls out. International credit rating agencies are in the process of downgrading the UK's credit rating (making borrowing costs higher and thus undermining the reduction of the deficit).

**Some things are clearer. The standout issue is the way that this has obliterated any working class independent movement. This whole campaign has been a campaign against the very idea of the working class in several ways. In the first place it has allowed both sides to whip up that notion of defending the nation, the epitome of capitalist rule. Rabid English Irish and Scottish nationalism all will now get extra force.**

Then there is the very fact of holding referendums themselves. The UK does not hold many such voting exercises so two inside two years is something of a departure. What they have done is breath new life into a political process which was clearly losing its legitimacy.[5] Like the Scottish referendum the only choice here for the working class is about which set of political gangsters will administer a system which exploits you all the same whoever is in power.[6] Whatever the outcome of the vote the "debate" remained and remains a capitalist one. Not only has this been useful in keeping class issues off the agenda

(what do we learn of the French strikes in the British media just now?) but will define a new nasty nationalist and racist political culture well into the future.

**The UK is not alone here. The rise of the Front National in France, the AfD in Germany, the Freedom Party in Austria as well as the victory of the ultra-nationalists in Poland and Hungary (the British Tory Party is in alliance with some of them like the True Finns, the Danish People's Party and the Polish Law and Justice Party)[7] all indicate that we are in a nightmarish period in history. Imperialist machinations have created living hells across the planet from Afghanistan to Africa.** These wars have driven over 65 million people across the planet out of their homes. Eventually some flee towards the supposedly more stable environments of the states that started the devastation in the first place. Many die on the way and the survivors are herded into camps or become victims of various mafia. And the racists and nationalists in the rich states play on this for their own immediate ends. It's a vicious circle which turns the spectre of rising nationalism into another threat to the future of humanity. Only an international and internationalist working class that recovers its class voice and its capacity to fight capitalism can oppose it.

CWO

26 June 2016

**A longer version of this document which will deal more widely with the international repercussions, as well as the political fallout for the ruling class, will appear in Revolutionary Perspectives 08 (due out in July).**

Notes

[1] This was in the article "EU Referendum: More Capitalist Choices to Reject" [leftcom.org] and we recommend it to readers.

[2] We have written many articles on the precise causes of the economic crisis of capitalism which can be found on our website but the most comprehensive is leftcom.org .

[3] And not just the tabloid press. Cameron and his cronies as well as the entire ruling class have played a hypocritical game on immigration to divide the working class. See leftcom.org or leftcom.org or leftcom.org and many more.

[4] Speaking to Channel 4 News 24 June 2016

[5] The actual voting went 17.4 million for "Leave", 16.1 million for "Remain", 12 million abstained and 7 million more did not even bother to register to vote meaning that the "Leave" decision is based on the



votes of 33% of eligible adults. The participation rate at 72% of the registered electorate was the highest for a long time and up from 65% at the 2015 general election.

[6] See leftcom.org

[7] See leftcom.org

T a k e n  
from <http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2016-06-27/brexit-vote-%E2%80%93-3-another-sign-of-global-capitalism%E2%80%99s-deepening-crisis>

# French Labour Protests

## French rail workers go on strike as disputes over labour laws spread

2/6/16

Striking rail workers have halted about half of French train services in a dispute over working hours as a standoff between the CGT (bureaucratic union controlled by the Communist Party) and the Socialist government over a proposed labour law reform dragged

Eurostar train services to Britain were not affected, while 75% of trains to Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland were running, and about 40% to Spain and Germany.

Three of the four rail unions called their members out on an open-ended strike over a planned reorganisation even though the government has intervened to press SNCF management to protect train drivers' weekends off. Managers say that concession could make the heavily indebted company uncompetitive when it has to open up to private competition in 2020 under EU rules.

from the end of next week in a separate dispute over curbs on pilots' pay. That would coincide with the first days of the Euro 2016 soccer championship in France.

**The Socialist government played down the disruption and stuck to its refusal to withdraw its planned labour reform, which is designed to make hiring and firing easier and to encourage negotiations on flexibility at company level.**

"France loves to give this image of itself as a sort of permanent drama, but that's not the reality. France is not at a standstill," Jean-Marie Le Guen, secretary of state for relations with parliament, told Radio Classique.

**The government has pulled out its chequebook to settle a series of sectoral disputes this week in an effort to prevent them turning into a nationwide protest movement before next week's start of the soccer tournament.**

CGT leader Philippe Martinez told LCP television his union had no intention of disrupting the soccer championship and urged the government to negotiate. But he also insisted it scrap a key article of the bill that would give company-level deals precedence over sector-wide agreements on pay and conditions.

"There's no question of blocking the Euros," Martinez said. "It's not transport strikes that will block the Euros."

**Martinez has said he will sue Medef chief Pierre Gattaz for describing his union as "terrorists" and "thugs". Gattaz, livid over the CGT action, said on Wednesday the "terrorist" label was inappropriate but he stood by the rest of his description.**

The conservative opposition vowed to amend the labour bill in the senate, where it has a majority, to make it tougher. The government can overrule the upper house when the legislation returns to the lower house for a final reading in July.

Opposition leaders said they would try to restore provisions dropped from the government's initial draft that would cap the compensation labour courts can award for unfair dismissal.

*Guardian*



on.

Tension mounted between the union and the Medef employers' federation, with the CGT urging energy workers to cut power supplies to the bosses' Paris headquarters.

The SNCF state railway said six out of 10 high-speed TGV trains were running on Wednesday, along with a third of other inter-city services and half of regional trains. Heavy flooding also cut some lines in central France and the rail link to Luxembourg.

**SNCF said 17% of its staff were on strike, up slightly from a previous strike last week, and forecast similar levels of traffic for Thursday. The CGT is also on strike at oil refineries and a fifth of petrol stations are short of fuel.**

The number two pilots' union at flag carrier Air France said it would give notice of plans to stage a two- to four-day strike



## “Wildcat Marches and Occupations Against Labour Law”

Paris 24/6/16

The March took place yesterday, a lot of searches on the way there with cops confiscating black clothing. Once the march started there were chants of “Everybody hates the police” along with “Everybody hates going round in circles”. 40-odd arrests by 3pm although most people seem to have been released pretty quickly.

A wildcat march took place with 2-500 people, and dispersed near place de la bourse, later on the police set up a massive checkpoint at Strasbourg Saint DENIS metro station and were carrying photos of people who had been on this march. There was a breakaway /separate wildcat march along Rue Daumesnil, that ended up at the station Gare de Lyon which was briefly occupied, before the police arrived and emptied the building.

(A lot of these ‘occupations’ simply mean people going to a place.) The marchers had until 6pm to disperse and a few hundred were in place de la Bastille at about 5.20 when they were

**kettled. Wildcat march from Menilmontant heading down towards Belleville just before 8, it lasted about an hour, one marcher was arrested for shouting, up to four arrests total.**

A marcher was severely beaten by cops as they gassed marchers and fired rubber grenades, they then started trying to delete all photos. Banks and the CFDT union headquarters were targeted.

Thanks to Libcom

## BELGIUM – WORKERS FIGHT AUSTERITY

31/5/16

**Large parts of Belgium have come to a standstill as transport strikes to oppose Government austerity measures caused serious disruption in Brussels and the French-speaking region and exposed the political fault lines of the divided country.**

Train drivers were on strike on Tuesday for the sixth consecutive day, bringing to a halt most services in French-speaking Wallonia and delaying journeys in Brussels and Dutch-speaking Flanders. Some trains to Paris and German cities were delayed or cancelled, although Eurostar said it was sticking to its scheduled timetable.

**Public transport in Brussels was also disrupted for the second time in a week, with metro trains running every 15-20 minutes, according to transport authority STIB. In some French-speaking cities disruption was greater, with unions vowing that no trains, buses or trams would run in the city of Charleroi. Some postal workers were on strike and rubbish was not collected in Brussels.**

While trains ground to a halt in Francophone parts of the country in a dispute over a reduction in overtime pay, 50-65% of trains were running in Flanders, exposing the differences between the north and the less affluent, French-speaking south, where the unions are more powerful.

**The different approach to industrial action was reflected by the decision of two Francophone unions to reject a deal with the justice ministry to end a five-week prison-officers’ strike. Belgium’s justice minister, Koen Geens, promised on Monday to hire more prison officers, a concession that allowed him to**

reach an agreement with four out of six of the country’s prison-officers’ unions – the three Flemish unions and one liberal Francophone group.

Meanwhile, several thousand workers, including teachers, train drivers and fire fighters, marched in Brussels, to protest against cuts to public services. Some were



waving placards that read “fighting for our rights”.

**Trade unions have also been protesting against attempts to change Belgium’s labour laws. The government wants to make it easier for employers to hire part-time workers on short-term contracts, but union critics say this will lead to the introduction of zero-hour contracts in Belgium.**

The strikes have provoked a furious backlash from student unions, who fear disruption during exam season. “There are few schools that are functioning normally to-

day,” Pascal Chardome, an official with the CGSP union, told Belgian TV channel RTBF. Most schools were reported to be open, although pupils were likely to have been affected by transport strikes.

The FGTB union, which claims 1.5 million members, has called a general strike for 24 June to protest against government policies of “austerity and labour-market flexibility”. Separately, judges have announced rolling strikes during the first week in June to protest against cuts to legal budgets.

**The month of strikes is a blow to the centre-right/liberal coalition government, which has just approved a €4m (£3m) campaign aimed at revitalising Belgium’s image abroad following the Brussels attacks.**

The lopsided nature of industrial action is not new to Belgium, but is seen as creating more tensions than before, because the Flemish separatists, the N-VA (New Flemish Alliance), are now the largest party in government.

Guardian

### Several acts of sabotage on the railway network in Wallonia

Belga

Published Wednesday, June 1, 2016 at 12:03

Six acts of sabotage have been recorded since 6:00 Wednesday; some were still ongoing about 10:00 am in many places of the Walloon railway network, said a spokesman for the infrastructure manager Infrabel, which condemns the facts.

They occur as the rail strike continues. These acts were particularly alert fire-

crackers placed on the tracks, which automatically engage the emergency brake, said Infrabel, and a red flag on the tracks, which also engages the brake. Short-circuits have also been caused to jam the signals.

These facts were noted in Flawinne, Ronse, Waterloo, Châtelet and La Louvière South, “where strikers were also reported on the tracks.” Infrabel considers these acts as “irresponsible

and outrageous” and “reserves the right to prosecute those who put people’s lives in danger.” “There already have been casualties during an emergency braking,” adds Infrabel.

Source in French: [http://www.rtbf.be/info/regions/detail\\_plusieurs-actes-de-sabotage-sur-le-reseau-ferroviaire-en-wallonie?id=9313457](http://www.rtbf.be/info/regions/detail_plusieurs-actes-de-sabotage-sur-le-reseau-ferroviaire-en-wallonie?id=9313457)

## VIDEO

Infrabel: sabotage on the tracks

[http://www.rtbf.be/auvio/detail\\_infrabel-sabotages-sur-les-voies?id=2115106](http://www.rtbf.be/auvio/detail_infrabel-sabotages-sur-les-voies?id=2115106)

# CHINESE RAIL WORKERS’ NEWS

*Part Two of a series of translations from the independent workers’ newsletter Railroaders’ Dispatch. For background see the “Prologue” to issue #1. Below is a translation of “A Few Tales of Rights Defense” by “One Hundred Years of Solitude” from issue #1 (June 2015). The original is available here.*

In order to fight for our rights, we have to unite. The Southern Railway’s (XX) Line has done well in this regard. They got organized because three people took the initiative. After studying relevant laws and regulations, train operators started developing their own tactics for collective action:

1. Don’t raise a ruckus (??); clock in and out of work as usual.
2. Off-duty workers should go to the Petition Office (???) of the provincial government, wearing work uniforms and standing together in a line.
3. Have groups of workers take turns demonstrating outside the Petition Office, making sure a group is there every day.

The (XX) Line wanted to separate the three leaders of the action and have them relocated. Upon hearing this, a dozen or so train operators went to find the director of the Line to protest. Every day the director was under intense pressure, and his appearance grew more and more haggard as the days went on.

One day, the director invited them to dinner. The operators went, but before starting to eat, they flipped over the table and yelled, “We won’t eat your food!” In other words, they resisted the director’s attempt to buy them out. No matter how the managers tried to punish these workers, other train operators unconditionally supported them and all chipped in to cover their wages. With so many people helping out, how much money does it cost an individual to support punished workers? If the collective action succeeds, how much money does an individual stand to gain? Even a child can figure this out.

In the end, they achieved a small victory, but they didn’t stop there. To this day, they’re still struggling for more gains. This happened in 2008. After the success of the action, train operators won a large increase in their wages. At that time, all the drivers were trying to get driving assignments (??), which paid 12,000 yuan at that time! [...]

So in order to fight for our rights, we need people who are articulate and understanding to lead the way. Others should support actions in a practical way. We cannot afford to be selfish. But



we should also be reasonable and restrained and not rely on empty words. Before actions we need to thoroughly prepare and devise specific plans.

If we support those who take the lead, and if the latter resist the managers’ attempts to buy them out, we can achieve great things. The managers panic when they see so many people united. If one person tries to perform an action by him or herself, the manager will fire that person immediately without hesitation. What about ten people? A hundred people? A thousand people?

ple? If we don’t unite, they won’t think we amount to shit. If we unite, they won’t amount to shit. Even if

we sue them, if only four or five people sue them, they can handle it, but if hundreds of people sue them and go to court together, and if we don’t go to work, they’ll be forced to sit down and talk.

**For this kinds of thing, we can’t expect immediate results. But we can organize and try: let the strong contribute labor and the ones with money contribute funds. When the manager comes out to negotiate, everyone should stand outside and join in courageously. I know this isn’t easy, but there doesn’t seem to be any other way.[...]**

I heard an amazing example of rights defense from one of my good friends in Fujian. He went to Beijing by himself and registered at a hotel at 10 PM. Before 6 AM he was gone, no one knew where. Turns out he had gone to Tian’anmen Square with a placard and was immediately taken away by plainclothes police, and then he handed in the documents. Later every worker contributed 2,000 yuan.

Have you heard of “The Seven Sisters of the Nanchang Passenger Line”? They were seven workers on collective contracts. Nowadays whenever a new car begin operation, it hires new workers who do the same work as regular workers, but with much lower pay. These seven female workers went to the head of the company to demand equal pay, and knelt outside of the main gate with placards. But then they discovered something horrible. An insider told us that the company would give regular positions to only 10% of contract workers per year. But no one ever told us! For this reason many workers on the Nanchang Line have gone to the company seeking arbitration.

**All of this I’ve heard from other workers, and dammit, it really makes my blood boil. I wanted to go back and organize with other people, but no one was willing to stand up!**

Over the last two years, I’ve personally witnessed two rights defense actions. Fifty train operators went to the administration,

but the administration wouldn't listen to them, so they turned their trains around to Beijing. The administration panicked and agreed to talk with them.

**But the administration heads are so ridiculous now that we can't discuss things rationally with them. Because of transportation problems last year, a dozen or so of us workers said, "We're not running these routes. Whoever**

**wants these routes run can do it themselves. If you make us run these routes we'll leave en masse. We'll go home and won't come back."**

Man, we really have to struggle, even just to afford to eat and keep living each day. Our goal is to increase our income, to get the pay we deserve for all the sweat and tears of our youth. I come from a family of railroaders. Our parents and grandparents

gave their whole lives to the railroad. Our generation, too, must eat from the same bowl. We just hope to live with a little dignity.

## MEXICAN LABOUR NEWS

**Sunday, June 19, 2016, the Mexican Federal police fired live bullets at demonstrators blocking the highway near the village of Nochixtlan in Oaxaca State. This state repression of extreme violence resulted in numerous injuries and a dozen deaths. — That roadblock was set up by the Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE), students and parents, many of whom belong to indigenous peoples.**

For several months, particularly in the states of Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero and Michoacan, large-scale movements against the "educational reform" that the government aims at imposing is fiercely attacked with batons, tear gas, flash balls. Teachers are threatened, dismissed from their work, jailed. — The road blockades were decided in early June following the arrest of several leaders of the CNTE

of Oaxaca section.

**A real media war is waged against the rebels accused of being "terrorists", "lazy", "opponents to progress." The "progress" of the "Quality and Education Law" consists in making education a commodity and handing it over to the private sector for the benefit of the most favoured. As recalls a banner. "Educational reform is not just about teachers, but also against the popula-**

**tion," many families, especially indigenous communities, provide assistance to teachers, participate in demonstrations.**

Already in June 2006, teachers had occupied the centre of Oaxaca City, before being brutally evicted. The population –



parents, students, young working class neighbourhoods, indigenous peoples – had joined the organized resistance and self-management of the city: the "Commune of Oaxaca" was defeated only in November by a military and police repression of extreme violence.

**Our companions of the Mexican Anarchist Federation, the Magonista Zapatista Alliance, the Anarchist Black Cross are fully involved in this struggle and regularly update us on the situation. In response to the statement of the**

"Self-management and libertarian communism" throughout all Russia. His arrest coincided with the final preparations for this initiative ... His detention will be extended until at least June 2016.

**2015 was a bad year for opponents of the Russian dictatorial regime under Vladimir Putin. The state has been heavy handed, multiplying arrests and convictions for forced labour camp sen-**

**National Indigenous Congress (CNI) and the Zapatistas of the EZLN addressed on June 20 "to the people of Mexico and the peoples**

of the world", the Anarchist Federation expresses its total solidarity to the teachers' struggle and the popular revolt. It demands an immediate end to the repression and the release of all prisoners.

**If the "state of emergency" allows the French government to further restrict the freedoms so as to try and impose a "Labour Law" of which they had been dreaming of for a long time, it is a real "state of siege" that is established by the Mexican State. In a period where some people preach resignation and submission, where others advocate a nationalist reaction and the illusion of a change through the ballot box, the Anarchist Federation practices more than ever an internationalism based on practical solidarity, the exchange experiences with all those who do not yield to the offensive of the state at the service of capitalism.**

As recalls the CNI and the EZLN: "A storm, in addition to the tempest and chaos also makes fertile ground from which hatches a new world"

Francophone Anarchist Federation (FA)  
Internationale des Fédérations anarchistes (IFA)

<http://federacionanarquistademexico.org/>

**tences. The anarchist and antifascist Dimitri Buchenkov, arrested on 2 December 2015, has paid the price of this policy which aims to silence opponents.**

Research professor in political science and history of 36 years, Dimitri Buchenkov is the author of several books on the history of contemporary anarchism in Russia. He joined the libertarian communist organization Autonomous Action in 2002 in Nizhny Novgorod, and then moved to Moscow in 2008. He organized several

## RUSSIA

### Russia: Solidarity with anarchist Dimitri Buchenkov

Dimitri had plans to organize in early 2016 an anti-fascist and anarchist forum entitled



street protests and various cultural events. He participated in the creation of the anti-fascist centre V Project. In 2015, unknown (probably members of police FSB, former KGB) persons severely beat him. He got away with a concussion.

**The police suspect him of involvement in the “disorders” of May 6, 2012, that is to say the clashes in Bolotnaya Square in Moscow in a context marked by protests across Russia against the rigged elections won by Putin. That day was Dimitri was in Nizhny Novgorod. This**

**accusation has an air of déjà vu. It is indeed very common for the police and judiciary to boot the system produce charges to gaol regime opponents.**

The arrest comes at a time marked by the 70% decline of oil revenues for more than two years and international sanctions against the repression in Russia. There is much discontent amongst workers over unpaid wages and the need for many Russians to combine several odd jobs to survive. It also results in a multiplication of strikes and protest rallies. Thus, there is repression aimed at discouraging any hint of resistance.

**That did not stop the anti-capitalist and progressive organizations organizing a march in Moscow on May 1st. Participants expressed on this occasion their solidarity with political prisoners in Russia.**

**Solidarity groups Vladimir Buchenkov - [www.facebook.com/freebuchenkov/](http://www.facebook.com/freebuchenkov/) - <https://vk.com/freebuchenkov> .**

To support Dimitri Buchenkov in jail, you can also transfer money to the Anarchist Black Cross of Moscow, which plays an important role in solidarity with anarchists and anti-fascists in Russia:

Paypal of  
ABC-Moscow: abc\_msk@riseup.net

## BOOK REVIEW CORNER

**Unruly Equality: US Anarchism in the 20th Century by Andrew Cornell, Published by University of California Press.**

**“The Crisis in the IWA & The Sect Phenomena”**

**The current turmoil and split developing in the International Workers Association (IWA), which links up a few smallish syndicalist unions (allegedly favouring ultra democratic processes, direct action in its various forms and the workers’ control project) and mostly sectlets and cults, spotlights the continuing problem of the sect phenomena within the syndicalist milieu in the Anglo World and elsewhere. (1) It represents an important obstacle to the pursuit of the long range serious industrial organising which can achieve genuine mass syndicalist industrial unionism internationally. The current crisis highlights the absurdity of tiny groups consisting of mostly students and workers with high levels of autonomy in their work often associated with the university milieu seeing themselves as the nucleus of mass syndicalist union movements. There have never been any historical precedents supporting such an eventuality.**

**Whilst when the IWA initially formed in 1922 it consisted almost completely of syndicalist mass unions with tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of members. The historical evidence also points to these formations stemming from complex processes in a radically different international context to today. Particularly a major upsurge in the international class struggle and syndicalist tendencies in the socialist and anarchist movements of these days.**

**Radically different from the Stalinist legacy influenced leftist milieus of the Anglo World and elsewhere today.**

Whilst, other factors were also critical to the emergence of syndicalist union movements such as competition between the early social democratic and Republican movements for working class electoral support and even State sponsorship of labour exchanges and syndicalist movements to counter balance socialist/communist union movements. (2)

**“From Tiny Acorns – Mass Syndicalist Union Oaks Do not Grow!”**

Today’s IWA cults and sects find wasting their very limited resources massaging the macro bureaucracy of the IWA as somehow glamorise and obviously much easier than the gruelling hard yards of serious long range industrial work they should be doing. They get drawn into all manner of stunts and the manufacture of “papier-mache” unions or unions which are completely imaginary or meet in largeish phone booths as union halls, to impress overseas gullible members of the IWA. Where they do win “victories”, it is normally of a “microscopic” significance or from acting as pseudo social workers/lobbyists for groups of workers in peripheral sectors. The same sort of stuff the corporate/bureaucratic unions on occasion achieve. These sectlets are heavily informed by the Stalinist legacy and middle

class/student based left subculture, and associated with all manner of organisational navel gazing, support for identity politics, etc.

**Whilst the larger sections such as the Spanish CNT (National Confederation of Labour) with currently 4,000 members certainly can’t be characterised as sects. However, these sections seem to be taking the historical trajectory of “minority” syndicalist movements. Involving adopting the features of the much larger corporate unions such as working within the framework of the industrial relations racket in their respective country, rather than emphasising direct action on the job. In the case of the CNT according to latest information it seems to rely extensively on “clever” lawyers and quirks of the Spanish IR legislation to win victories and expand membership. (3) These sections give the impression of becoming micro democratic versions of the corporate unions and are moving from the syndicalist orientation.**

**A major contribution to this trajectory is the lack of a base in strategic industrial sectors necessary to defy repressive IR legislation, wipe out the base of the Corporate Unions, launch strike waves across industry and build an expanding Syndicalist movement. As well the associated low level of morale of workers in these sectors and unwillingness to take solidarity action to assist fellow workers is a major consideration. It’s absolutely vital that serious long range work in these key sectors is pursued to establish the transitional steps leading to the crystallisation of mass syndicalist union movements in various countries which can eventually co-ordinate their activities globally to tackle capitalist globalisation, and its strategies. These more substantial work place based groupings and definitely the lesser ones would be better off dissolving into networks and just concentrating on this serious long range work and dropping the**

micro bureaucratic baggage and absurd pretensions that they are fully fledged union confederations or will become one eventually.

**The book under review throws considerable light on the background to the current anarchist and syndicalist "sect" phenomena and the associated leftist sub culture, which contributes to it in the USA, the general Anglo World and elsewhere today.**

An important back drop to the publishing of this book was the Anti-Globalist movements which commenced with the 1999 WTO Seattle protests and concluded with the Occupy movement of 2011-12. Various commentators have alleged these movements have something to do with anarchism. As they practice ultra democratic and participatory democracy processes. However, these movements never developed a clear revolutionary objective and program of work. They were easily snuffed out by state repression and through internal confusion and contradictions. **Whilst in some parts of the US, the local bourgeois state has ultra democratic features, does that make it "anarchist"? This confusion and the ultra liberal conception of anarchism as a means to perfect dimensions of bourgeois society and the associated absurd notion that we could all have equal opportunity to rise up in a peaceful and environmentally sustainable capitalist setup heavily informs the author's screwed up views on anarchism and the content of the volume.**

#### "The Zenith of US Anarchism"

In discussing the "heyday" of anarchism in the US, the author looks at the movement in the early 20th Century when it was a significant force in the US labour movement and certainly not an exotic leftist sub culture composed largely of navel gazing middle class and student swell headed activoid super hero elements. He sketches its important role in the organising drives of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and syndicalist influence in certain AFL (American Federation of Labour) affiliates particularly in the needle trades amongst Jewish workers.

#### "Decline of the Movement"

**The author makes the interesting point that apart from the savage repression of the anarchist and syndicalist milieu and particularly the IWW during and after WWI, another more important reason for the decline of anarchist activity and influence in the workers movement was**

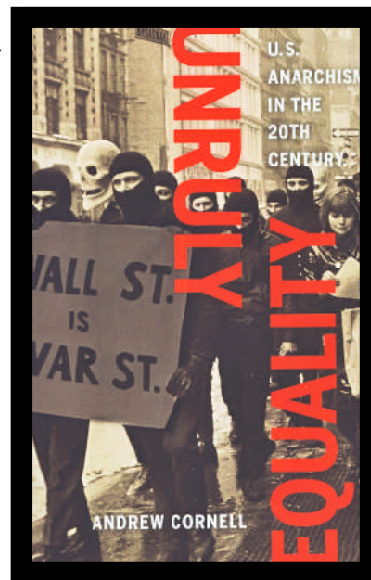
**changes to Federal immigration legislation which prevented the immigration of anarchist workers to recoup losses due to state repression.**

Another significant reason for the side tracking and decline in anarchist influence/syndicalism in the labour movement was infatuation amongst particularly Jewish anarchist workers in co-operative colonies, such as the Stelton and Mohegan colonies. However a more critical obstacle to the anarchist movement regaining its industrial influence and in other spheres was the emergence of mass Stalinism and associated Communist Parties as satellites of the Soviet party via the Comintern (International Communist Party organisation controlled by Moscow). Even the Vanguard group -one of the most important anarchist groups discussed in the volume formed in 1932 and publishers of the outstanding "Vanguard: A Libertarian Communist Journal" which sought to rebuild a syndicalist tradition among US anarchists was affected by its influence. Particularly via the attraction of the panorama of expanding international Stalinism and its initiatives on its key militant Mark Schmidt, a veteran of the Russian Revolution of 1917. (4)

#### "The Middle Class Leftist Hijacking and the McCarthy Era"

The author sees the 1940's being the period when anarchist milieu moved away from class struggle and a working class social base and was drawn into a middle class/student sub cultural and protest politics phenomena.

**Associated with this trajectory the "Libertarian League" formed in 1954. Despite having a formally syndicalist orientation, the author shows had a social base similar to other anarchist groups of the period among middle class elements with a few important exceptions such as Sam Dolgoff.** Due to the McCarthy era there were few opportunities for serious industrial work in the AFL-CIO unions, whilst by the late 1950's the IWW had been reduced to the status of a small sect of aging members. Consequently, its major activities lacked an industrial orientation and included in-



ternational solidarity work for victims of state repression, publication of its journal "Views and Comments" and the holding of regular forums.

Another key group of the 1960's discussed in the volume formed by student radicals was the Solidarity Bookshop of Chicago established in 1964 and the paper "The Rebel Worker". Members of the group joined the IWW and were involved in an unsuccessful farm workers organising drive in South West Michigan. Subsequently the paper and group became drawn into Surrealism and collaboration with other ultra left groups such as "Facing Reality".

Another grouping of the 1960's discussed which went on to have tens of thousands of members at its peak was SDS (Students for a Democratic Society). It claimed to favour participatory democracy, and imploded at its 1969 National Convention, resulting in a series of different split offs informed by Marxism Leninism- the Radical Youth Movement which seeded the New Communist Movement and the Maoist Progressive Labour Party, which spawned the Urban Guerrilla "Weather Underground". **Subsequently Maoism became the most important current to the left of the Democratic Party with the New Communist Movement formations having an estimated core combined membership of 10,000 nationally and much wider influence in the early 1970's.(5)**

The author examines the emergence of the Radical Decentralisation Project, whose key figure was "Murray Bookchin" as an allegedly anarchist faction in the SDS. Whilst emphasising ultra democratic processes it also peddled "lifestylism" (the nonsense of trying to live an anarchist lifestyle in capitalist society and "dropping out" to live on a "hippie commune") and "environmentalism". It imploded following the dissolution of the SDS and failed to crystallise into a sect in the radical student milieu.

**Another key grouping discussed which commenced in the 1980's is "Food Not Bombs" which was a spinoff from the anti-nuke movement, an essentially charity style outfit based on a social worker/activoid superhero orientation.**

#### "Let a Thousand Poisonous Weeds Bloom!"

The epilogue to the volume catalogues the various ephemeral "poisonous weeds" in-

formed by identity politics and lifestyle with some notable exceptions which compose the so called anarchist movement wing of the left subculture “hot house” in the US from the 1970s to the Occupy movement. The author ignores the key role of agencies of US capitalism in facilitating this confusion such as the CIA and various foundations and the tertiary education system via encouraging identity politics and drug sub cultures.(6)

**The author also fails to take account of the Stalinist legacy upon these hot house growths, which is interwoven with adherence to aspects of identity politics and middle class leftist “oppression mongering” in the shape of aspects of identity politics being beyond debate and discussion and the wide acceptance of the hypocritical navel gazing “safe spaces policies” in this milieu.** These “politics” of course preclude any serious coordinated strategic industrial organising by genuine anarchist/syndicalist groupings. Whilst causing the more “serious” anarcho outfits to either consciously or unconsciously ape in many ways the antics of the Marxist Leninist lineage micro parties with the proliferation of the morally and ethically depraved “politicos”.

It was the serious industrial work conducted by the Paterson based “Right to Existence” Group which played such a key pioneering role in the emergence of a

syndicalist current in the WMF (Western Miners Federation) in the early 20th Century which contributed significantly to the formation of the IWW in 1905. **It also played a crucial role in later important IWW organising drives in the Eastern USA. This group was certainly not engrossed in all the grotesque organisational navel gazing and disgusting oppression mongering and guilt tripping of the current so called “more serious” anarchist outfits.(7)**

In conclusion, the book under review provides some important insights into why in the contemporary USA and elsewhere the so called anarchist movement is largely a sub cultural phenomena and the sect orientation is so common. Such as amongst important sections of the IWW and most of the few allegedly class struggling anarchist groups.

**However, the volume spreads plenty of misinformation about what constitutes anarchism in the USA, confusing it with aspects of “ultra liberalism” and middle class protest politics.**

Another important problem with the book is the author’s grossly inadequate discussion of the impact of the Stalinist/Trotskyist/Maoist legacies on the US Leftist milieu and the so called anarchist one. Whilst the author also fails to take

account of the “hidden hands” of agencies of US capitalism in facilitating the impotence and subcultural nature of much of the general leftist and anarchist milieus.

Mark McGuire

#### Notes

1. See discussion on Libcom.org “CNT Proposes reorganisation of the IWA”.
2. See “Democracy, Trade Unions and Political Violence in Spain: The Valencian Anarchist Movement 1918-1936 by Richard Purkiss.
3. *ibid*
4. See “Fragments: A Memoir” by Sam Dolgoff
5. See “Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to: Lenin, Mao and Che” By Max Elbaum.
6. See “Gloria Steinem, the Women’s Movement and the CIA” on the internet and “Acid Dreams: The Complete Social History of LSD: The CIA, the Sixties and Beyond” by Martin Lee and Bruce Shlain.
7. See “Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World” by Salvatore Salerno.

## Germany’s Revolutionary Workers of 19/18/19 Reviewed by Thomas Klikover, *Wild Socialism - Workers Councils in Revolutionary Berlin, 1918-21*. By Martin Comack. 97 pages, Lanham: University Press of America, 2012

### Continued from Last Edition

But shortly before the SPD’s Noske used the Free Corps to liquidate the revolutionary workers councils, ‘the Obleute, the independent SPD called USPD, and the Spartacists – renamed into Communist Party – called a protest demonstration of several hundred thousand, many armed [when] the Spartacists called for a council republic’ (Comack, p.53). The council republic was to end capitalism and parliamentarianism. Against that Noske’s Free Corps translated Ebert’s “this can’t go on” ideology into a cruel murderous killing spree. The

**‘Free Corps began to enter Berlin from the suburbs ... some rebel prisoners were summarily shot on the spot. Sixty machine guns were deployed at the Spandau munitions plant and workers literally driven back to work at gun-**

**point [and perhaps worst of all] Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were arrested, beaten and shot by Free Corps’ (Comack, p.54).**

The military officer of the murdering plot later noted in his diary, “I could not have performed the action without the consent of Noske with Ebert in the background. Very few people have realised why I have never been ... charged with any offence”. The SPD’s man for killing workers admitted what he had done. In short, the revolution of the revolutionary Workers Councils was betrayed by the SPD as the German historian Sebastian Haffner’s “Failure of a revolution: Germany 1918/19” (1973) has argued decisively and conclusively. **But shortly after Noske’s murderous Free Corps had finished the first round of SPD’s dirty work, ‘the Spartacists [still managed**

**to] call for a general strike in March 1919 and Noske’s Free Corps returned to Berlin’ (Comack, p. 57) to murder more workers. ‘To the usual array of superior firepower the government forces now added aerial bombardment. Noske decreed death for anyone bearing arms against the government, an order to which the Free Corps gave liberal interpretation. Some 1,200 to 1,500 Berliners were killed, including 300 unarmed sailors of the Naval Division. Indeed, throughout 1919 the Free Corps displayed firmness in the suppression of workers and soldiers councils and leftist outbreaks throughout the Reich, in Bremen, Munich, and elsewhere’ (p.58).**

With the killing and massacre of workers the SPD not only cemented capitalism and literally killed off movements towards industrial democracy, it also showed capital that it was there when needed to do whatever it takes to secure capitalism. After the end of the revolution-





ary Workers Councils, the SPD's 'Noske began a systematic repression against the oppositionist Left' (Comack, p.65). Given the murder of its leaders (Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht), the mass-killing of revolutionary councillors, trade unionists and workers by the SPD, 'the factory Arbeiterräte [workers councils] found their viability ebbing away under the pressure of trade union competition, government repression, employer hostility and legal restrictions' (Comack, p. 69). The SPD's move against workers was supported through its own social-democratic legal scholar Hugo Sinzheimer (1875-1945) abusing workers councils as "Rätediktatur" [council dictatorship]. Meanwhile, the compliant sections, the official, pro-capitalist trade unions and SPD apparatchiks were richly rewarded with:

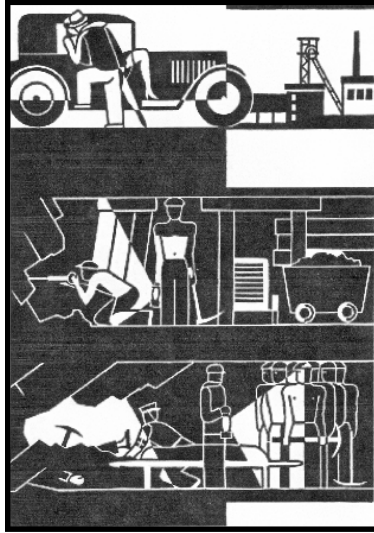
- \* seats on corporate supervisory boards [Co-Determination] designed to further incorporate labour into the well crafted system of industrial relations by making labour part of Managerialism;

- \* stabilising the main elements of institutionalised German industrial relations: the legally enshrined and largely pacified works councils;

- \* the legal recognition of trade unions – now largely eliminated as workplace actors – and collective bargaining setting the path for post-WWII industry-level collective bargaining; and

- \* the acceptance of the SPD as a willing junior partner supportive of parliamentarianism and capitalism.

**As for the revolutionary workers councils, 'these workers were abandoned by the [social-democratic] party of the SPD and the [official] trade unions, along with the traditional organisations of the German proletariat [nevertheless for a few years in the history of the German labour movement, 1918-1921] workers councils became a viable alternative to the capitalist economic system**



**and the established political order [creating] cells of a future self-organised society' (Comack, p. 75).** Overall, the Workers Councils were cornered between the conservative reformism of the majority social-democrats, who did not hesitate to employ force to suppress "Wild Socialism" and the sporadic and ill-conceived uprisings of the Spartacists/communists on the other when faced with the overwhelming firepower of Noske's Free Corps.

But revolutionary Workers Councils and committees of rank and file workers have appeared as mass movements in the factories of St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1905 and 1917, during the Spanish Revolution in the mid-1930s, in Budapest in 1956, in the May Days of 1968 in France, in Chile, Portugal and Teheran [and might re-emerge in coming] decades' (Comack, p.76). Despite all that has been done against the revolutionary Workers

Councils, the idea of a council republic as an alternative to parliamentarianism and capitalism seems to live on. **Virtually the same applies to the more revolutionary wing of the German labour movement. It has been persecuted under the Kaiser during the 19th century and early 20th century, it has been shot and murdered during the revolution of 1918/19, it has been placed in concentration camps between 1933 and 1945, tortured and killed.** Its political party – the KPD – has been outlawed in post-WWII Germany and it has been targeted under Willy Brandt's "Berufsverbote" [prohibition of taking up jobs] under the SPD regime of 1972. But despite all this, the ideas and political grandchildren of the 1918/19 revolution not only make up today's third largest political party in Germany, "The

Left" is also anchored in state parliaments with holding, for example, the position of state premier in Thuringia (Bodo Ramelow) in 2015.

**In conclusion, the days of the 1918/19 revolution and workers councils occurred at a time when German capitalism came close to be annihilated. Disillusioned with war, capitalism, and Kaiser, the Workers Councils became a mass movement to which the ruling elite and capitalism reacted with unprecedented force and mass killings.** Mustering all its firepower against workers, the state – run by the social-democrats (SPD) – used the Free Corps to – quite literally – murder the revolutionary sections of the German working class and incorporate the remaining parts into its system of industrial relations. For being obedient to the SPD's system of industrial relations, compliant trade unions were rewarded with the legal recognition of collective bargaining, works councils and co-determination rights in the 1920 Works Council Act.

**Based on the above one can safely argue that the structures of today's Germany are the result of a class compromise between a revolutionary workers movement as expressed in Workers Councils and capitalism in which the SPD sided with capitalism but was also forced to give "very limited" rights to workers. These rights are still found today.** While Workers Councils sought to end war, capitalism and Kaiser, the SPD envisioned something different. Its version was to place their much weakened and de-unionised works councils at the centre posing no longer any threat to capitalism but offering a kind of co-management and today one would say: "HRM appendage" to management. The post 1918/19 system incorporated workers into the system of capitalism. To understand today's Germany, Martin Comack's "Wild Socialism – Workers Councils in Revolutionary Berlin" remains an indispensable study of the history of the German working class.

## Obituary Jack Grancharoff: 1925 - 2016

I first met Jack in 1974 when there were allegedly "Sydney Anarchist" meetings at the Old Union Building at Sydney University, associated with the holding of an Anarchist Conference in early 1975. These meetings were chaotic affairs with anyone

coming who liked the "anarchist label". The conference or circus which was held was in similar vein. Luckily I didn't attend it. I was subsequently involved with the MacQuarie University Anarchist Group. Jack often attended the group's

meetings. I later learned Jack had been a victim of Stalinist state repression in Bulgaria. He had been an official of the Agrarian Party.

He had been arrested by the secret police during the period of the suppression of the Bulgarian "revolution" toward the end of WWII and had been ferociously tortured in a concentration camp. *See Page 20*

## NEWS & NOTES

Some of the most important news in the NSW Railways is the continuing savage attack by the Baird Government and the rail bosses on station staff. A particular focus of the onslaught is Central Station in Sydney. (See article Page 3.)

Whilst the management offensive in the NSW Railways is intensifying, workers are being ravaged by a plague of bullying bosses. (See article Page 4.)

While many of us have gone to the local zoo and were amused by the mischievous antics of monkeys. In this edition we focus on an unusual species, the Sydney Trains management variety and the mischief, they have got up to with some film footage of a worker's accident on the job. These antics have had nothing to do with delicious bunches of bananas but Workers Compensation issues and are far from cute and amusing! (See article Page 4.)

In this edition we throw new light on aspects of the Baird Govt's Light Rail extensions project. Showing how it is interwoven with its agenda of facilitating privatisation of Housing Commission homes and publicly owned land. So as to assist its developer business mates. The STA's changes to bus routes are also assisting the Govt's business mates in the gambling/Casinos sector. (See article Page 5.)

In this edition we provide an obituary of a Sydney Legend - Jack Grancharoff, also known as "Jack The Anarchist" by a Comrade who knew and worked with him for decades.

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### Grassland Infoshop

207B Nicholson St.  
Footscray  
3011 Vic.

### Where we stand:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### TO FIND OUT MORE

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

Name .....

Address.....

General Secretary

PO Box 106 Kotara 2289 NSW.

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

*Continued From Page 18*

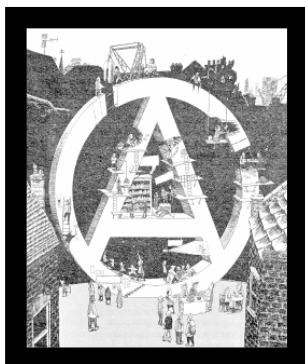
However, at this time he met members of the Bulgarian anarchist movement which was a current in the revolutionary workers movement, not a middle class leftist subculture like in much of the contemporary Anglo World. As a result he came over to revolutionary anarchism. In subsequent years Jack and I collaborated helping each other out with our publications. He was editor of Red and Black: An Anarchist Journal. Jack became involved in the running of Jura Books after it formed in 1977 and some years later became drawn into resistance against an attempt by a cult which later became Black Rose Bookshop to seize control. This hijacking attempt was defeated and in subsequent years the premises became a focus of ASN activity and serious anarchist/anarcho-syndicalist publishing and assistance to long range serious industrial activity and grass roots militancy in public transport, the postal industry, the Fire Brigade and other sectors.

**Unfortunately Jack and others were “burnt out” by the struggle to defeat the cult in the years 1981-82. He foolishly wanted to “debate” issues and their authoritarian orientation with them. However you can’t have rational discussion with such groups. In fact you walk into their trap and are psychologically worn down via attending relentless meetings. These meetings were informed by extreme Stalinist techniques associated with Maoism and “criticism/self criticism”.**

In Sydney and other major cities in Australia, there is a pattern of attempts to set up centres/bookshops for serious/class struggle anarchist activity and being attacked or hijacked by cults and bourgeois subcultures. An important back drop is the predominance of mass Stalinism in the

form of the Communist Party to the left of the ALP for 3 to 4 decades in the 20th Century, the absence of a mass syndicalist union movement for anarchist centres to link up with and the predominance of ALP controlled bureaucratic unionism. Most drawn into the anarchist milieu often being students or workers with high levels of autonomy in their jobs connected with the university milieu.

In 2013 Jura Books was hijacked by another cult associated with Sid Parissi heavily influenced by the Stalinist legacy and particularly stemmed from an influx of mainly middle class students involved in the anti-Globalist Movement heavily influenced by the authoritarian ways of Trot groups - “Love and Rage” in the late 1990’s and onwards. (1)



Whilst others in Jura and the trustees consisted of either bourgeois elements or those which developed a thorough bourgeois mentality and Stalinist ways. The hijack particularly endangered the base of serious anarchist working class orientated activity in Sydney and one of the few and most important Syndicalist workplace papers in Australia. It has had a real effect in the class struggle and the slowing of the tempo of the employer offensive in NSW.

**In the 1950’s and 1960’s in Sydney, there had been similar takeovers. In the 1950’s the anarchist centre at the Liberty Hall in George Street Sydney was wrecked due to the takeover by the Bohemian “Libertarian Push” which held wild parties there and caused the loss of the lease and very expensive bond. In the late 1960’s, the centre known as the “Anarchist Cellar” in Paddington was taken over by an LSD subculture associated with Bill Dwyer, which resorted to criminal elements to maintain con-**

**trol. Jack had been criticised by a close comrade who was one of the few serious anarchists/anarcho-syndicalists in those days for not helping curb the latter takeover, contributed by Jack’s alleged “individualism”. He was also involved in the “Push” social scene.**

For many years Jack attended and was involved in numerous ASN discussion gatherings and conferences. Prior to the hijacking of Jura Books in 2013, there had been a campaign by these anti-anarchist elements against the ASN which involved a vicious and relentless campaign of bullying and harassment and constant provocations using the weasel word /politician speak, of “consulting”. The kind of despicable behaviour you would expect from a Stalinist legacy informed outfit manipulated by its guru. As a result I didn’t have a huge amount of contact with Jack in recent years. I was dismayed to learn in his later years that he had become a bit of a hippy in the bush where he resided.

My overall impressions of Jack is that he was always sincere in his commitment to anarchism through the time I have been associated with him. He would never be party to setting up some cult and taking advantage and manipulating inexperienced young people - students and others to set up a tiny pseudo church and encourage them in the vile and despicable ways of the Stalinist Legacy and politicians.

Mark

Notes:

1. See on the internet - A-infos: “Feminism and Class Struggle: A document is distributed” regarding the impact of the Stalinist Legacy and Identity Politics in this milieu. Prior to the highly orchestrated meeting in 2004 worthy of the worst union bosses, mentioned in this article, I stumbled across a prior “secret” meeting. There I noticed at a glance “brain washing” psychological manipulation techniques.