

VIGILANCE

maritime
workers
bulletin

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For rank & file control of the MUA - Nationalise the maritime industry under workers' control

Issue 32, May 14, 2007

MUA Elections 2007. April 30 - June 14

This year's MUA elections have seen national officials Paddy Crumlin (National Secretary) and Jim Tannock (Deputy National Secretary) get elected unopposed.

The same goes in Sydney for both Warren Smith (now Branch Secretary) and Glen Wood (Sydney Deputy Branch Secretary).

For the remaining contested positions, *Vigilance* recommends the following:

Sydney - Assistant Branch Secretaries
(Two officials to be elected)

- Garrett, Paul [up for re-election]
- McAlear, Paul
- McGarry, Damien
- Ryan, Lorraine

Vote for Paul McAlear plus one of the following:
Paul Garrett or Lorraine Ryan

National - Assistant National Secretaries
(Two officials to be elected)

- Cohrs, Werner
- Doleman, Michael [up for re-election]
- Newlyn, Derrick (Rick) [up for re-election]

Vote for any two of the three candidates listed above.

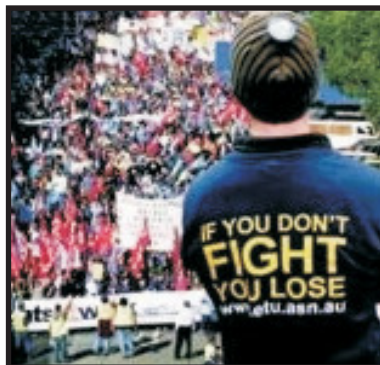
Elect better officials - YES! But is that enough?

Taking on the boss and defending our rights and conditions. We all want the best officials for the job. So how do we select them?

Being staunch or having great public speaking skills is good. But the best gauge of how an official will perform is the politics they stand for.

Both Paul McAlear and Warren Smith are members of the Communist Party. The party's *Maritime Industry Program* contains good working-class policies.

Vigilance therefore recommends a vote for Paul McAlear, regardless of the differences that it has with the CPA.



"They all change their tune once they're elected"

Unfortunately, this is all too often the case. Those who are elected with good intentions soon come under pressure from the bosses, the media and other officials to compromise and not rock the boat.

But the problem is not just the pressure of individuals. It is the fact that today's union leaderships form the base for a distinct union bureaucracy.

This bureaucracy is well established, well paid, unaccountable and treat unions like their property.

It develops material interests that separate them from the union ranks. This promotes the political outlook of compromise that is dominant among union leaders.

Most officials prefer negotiating to trade off conditions instead of fighting to keep them. Many use their power to hold back, sell short, or sell out struggles.

We need to transform our union

Electing better union officials is not enough. Only a *fundamental political transformation* of the unions will ensure that our unions act in our interests.

To transform the unions, the control of this bureaucratic layer must be broken. It must be replaced with the power of the rank and file membership and the broadest union democracy.

Only when we really control our own unions will we be able to use them effectively to defend ourselves against employer and government attacks.

For a militant, democratic MUA

The fundamental political transformation needed to revitalise our union requires policies that include:

For a militant, class struggle approach to defending and improving wages and conditions

For too long EBA negotiations have started by considering what the bosses are prepared to offer. We need to start by considering what our own needs are - then working out a strategy to get it.

Permanency, significant above inflation pay increases and a shorter working week (with no loss in pay and no trade offs) will only be won through industrial action campaigns.

For a serious industrial campaign against "WorkChoices"

The ACTU campaign against "WorkChoices" relies on a Rudd Labor government repealing these laws. But Rudd plans to keep some of Howard's nasties - mandatory secret ballots, drastic limits on the right to strike etc.

MUA leaders should not rely on Labor. They should instead be arguing for - and initiating - a campaign of nationwide strike action and frequent mass rallies to force John Howard to repeal his "WorkChoices" laws.

For rank and file control of the MUA

All union representatives - from national officials to workplace delegates - need to be elected every one or two years. Members must have the right to recall and replace all elected representatives.

We need yearly national and branch conferences with all decisions being binding on our officials. Branch committees must be expanded and meet monthly. Workplace meetings and elected strike committees to control all disputes.

No automatic support for Labor - democratise union political funding

Bob Hawke held down wages, smashed the BLF and Pilots' Unions and began privatisation. NSW Labor gutted workers compensation and now pushes for a third stevedoring operator to open up at Botany.

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Kevin Rudd will only water down "WorkChoices". And the MUA still throws money at the Labor Party.

Unionists must have the right to vote for or against donating and affiliating to Labor, another working class party or no party at all.

Oppose the private profit drive - fight for workers' control

A third stevedoring operator at Botany and a privatised Sydney Ferries would be terrible. But the status quo is not exactly great.

The alternative to the domination of private and government corporations is the fight for workers' control.

We need to progressively take the decision-making power out of the bosses' hands. From union control of

hiring and firing; to ending business secrecy by opening the books up for union inspection when they cry poor; to the nationalisation of the maritime industry under workers' control and beyond - this approach must become part of our union's militant agenda.

Internationalism in deeds - not just in words

Our union outlook - like the maritime industry - needs to be truly international.

The war in Iraq, the "war on terror", anti-Muslim hysteria, denying workers from abroad the right to seek asylum - none of these policies are in our interests. Union members need to be convinced of this through persistent argument and debate - not just one off union resolutions.

Rank & file involvement is the key

Transforming the unions requires the grassroots involvement of the rank and file. Only this will hold back the tendency of union officials to compromise - and help to replace the domination of the union bureaucracy with rank and file union control.

Only then will our unions be committed to the militant struggle needed to fight the attacks of both the bosses and the government.



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- **Robert Coombs: Bump me into parliament (No. 31)**
- **Who's afraid of a 24-hour general strike? (No. 30)**

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