

# VIGILANCE

maritime  
workers  
bulletin

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

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## DP World EA: What we will end up with & what we need

The current DP World Enterprise Agreement (EA) expired on June 30, 2008. Negotiations are slowing drawing to a close. So what can we expect from this EA - and will it meet our needs?

At the time of writing National (Part A) negotiations are yet to be finalised, but the agreement will most likely include pay rises of 5% a year for three years and back pay to be back dated to July 1.

DP World has pushed for a three year freeze of the consolidated (or shift) allowance for all VSE, GWE and supplementaries. Whether union negotiators have agreed to accept this or not is unclear.

The Local (Part B) agreement for Port Botany will see a few permanent jobs on offer - extra operations clerks, rail co-ordinators and a new health, safety and environment facilitator position.

Local negotiators have agreed to all shift breaks starting on the hour, which would make the second run 3 ¾ hours long (murder on night shift).

The general maintenance roster will see average hours rise from 33.6 to 35.5 hours a week. To be fully compensated for this, maintenance employees will need a one-off 5 to 6% pay rise *on top of* any nationally agreed wage rise. Will this happen?

A higher pay rise and a few extra permanent jobs are welcome. An increase in any roster hours is not. Either way, this latest EA will not address the big issues we face - inflation, casualisation, lack of seniority etc.

### What we need

We need a set of demands that will protect our jobs and give us what we need to keep on fighting for longer term goals. *Vigilance* believes that the following four demands would be a good place to start:

- A massive increase in the permanent / casual ratio (currently 51:49) with the eventual aim of permanent jobs for all. All upgrades to be based on seniority – not “merit”.
- Large wage rises to make up for decades of real wage losses (eg. 10% a year for three years). Full wage indexation / cost of living mechanism to ensure that our wages keep pace with inflation.

- Seven hours work for eight hours pay. Reduce the average working week to a maximum 35 hours – with no loss in pay.

■ Common EBA expiration dates for all stevedoring companies. Full right to strike over work conditions and union issues.

### Industrial action is the key

The only way to win demands like these is through industrial action. Stevedoring companies will never

give us a better deal without a strong strike to force their hand. Some in the union have deceived either themselves or the membership into believing that we can get a better deal without industrial action.

But some know better. Officials and DP World delegates in Fremantle have lodged a bargaining notice for legal, protected industrial action in order to fight for their claims. Why not other DP World sites too? We would all be in a much better bargaining position if all DP World sites did likewise.

The critical lesson to be learned out of this EA process is that the question of leadership comes first. If our union officials are not prepared to lead the fight that we need to protect our jobs and our futures, then we have to be prepared to fight to remove them.

### A militant program – the only alternative

It is clear that any real opposition has to come from the rank and file. The historic US West Coast longshore strike of 1934 was won despite the leadership of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA).



Harry Bridges and his "Albion Hall" group established elected strike committees to take the strike out of the hands of ILA leaders. In England after World War II unofficial dockers' committees fought for the list of improvements in the *Dockers' Charter*, despite the opposition of the leaders of their union (TGWU).

But even simple militancy is not enough. Time and time again militants have come up short when confronted with attacks by the government and their "friends" in the labor movement.

What we need to turn things around is a rank and file group or caucus that is built on a militant program (such as the one printed below).

It is only in this way that we can build a leadership that is 100% on the side of workers and dedicated to using the most militant and effective tactics to win.

Such a leadership will have learnt the lessons of the past and would no longer rely on the government and the Labor Party - the party that continues to privatise, hold down wages and keep anti-union laws in place.

This leadership would fight for a workers party based on a program to fight for a workers government. Such a government would end the cycle of inflation, poverty and war by nationalising all industry without compensation. Workers control would see production planned for economic need not profit.

The ultimate aim has to be the winning of workers' control of society and ending the capitalist system.

The first step down that road is realising that the only way to win at negotiation time is to take industrial action - with the support of our leaders when we can and without their support when we have to.

## **Vigilance Bulletin maritime action program**

**DEFEND OUR LIVING STANDARDS:** No more trading-off of our conditions. Large wage rises to recover lost real wages. More annual and sick leave. Full wage indexation / cost of living allowance so that wages always keep pace with inflation.

**DEFEND OUR JOBS:** End casualisation - permanent jobs for all. Enshrine seniority. Improved rosters and shift penalty rates. Seven hour shift for eight hours pay - three hour no-work night curfew. A shorter work week with no loss in pay - and slide the hours down and the wages up to create jobs.

**DEFEND OUR RIGHTS:** Full right to stop work and strike over safety, conditions and in support of other workers. Militant defense of all picket lines. Common expiry dates for all maritime agreements. Nation-wide industry strikes to achieve our goals.

**DEFEND OUR UNION:** Strike action to defeat all anti-union laws. No court room, government or police involvement in union affairs.

**BUILD SOLIDARITY:** Oppose all strikebreaking. Honour all picket lines. No handling of scab cargo. Organise the unorganised and the unemployed.

**FIGHT RACIAL & SEXUAL OPPRESSION:** Discrimination and exploitation of migrants, women etc. allows bosses to pit worker against worker.

**UNION CONTROL OF OUR JOBS:** For industry employment and union hiring halls. Full job equalisation and rotation. Skilled job training for all.

### **RANK & FILE CONTROL OF THE UNION:**

Annual election of all officials and delegates, with the right to recall and replace them. Officials to return to their old job for two months every year. Annual decision-making conferences. Re-establish job delegates' associations. Regular mass meetings and elected strike committees to control all disputes.

**PEACE IS UNION BUSINESS:** Black bans and strikes to demand US / Australian troops out of the Middle East and East Timor. Oppose military action against "rogue states" eg. Cuba, Venezuela, Iran.

**INTERNATIONAL WORKERS SOLIDARITY:** Support international strikes. Australian standards for all seafarers while in Australia. Full citizenship rights for refugees. Fight FOC shipping and multinational exploitation with a massive union aid program to build militant unions in the Asia-Pacific.

**WORKERS' CONTROL OF INDUSTRY:** End business secrecy - open up the company books to union inspection when bosses cry poor. Nationalise the maritime industry without compensation and place it under workers' control.

**NO RELIANCE ON THE LABOR PARTY:** No support to Labor's privatisation, real wage cuts and union busting. Oust the trade union bureaucracy. For a workers party based on the unions that fights for a workers government to seize major industry. For a planned economy to end poverty, racism & war.

**The right of all members to express opinions in union matters is essential if our union is to be democratic. All contributions to Vigilance are welcome so long as they are in the interests of the working class.**

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