

VIGILANCE

maritime
workers
bulletin

vigilance - زكي - kewaspadaan - sự cảnh giác - pagkalisto - бдительность - 警觉 - επαγρυπνηση - wachsamkeit - जागरण - uyaniklik - هوشيار - vigilancia

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

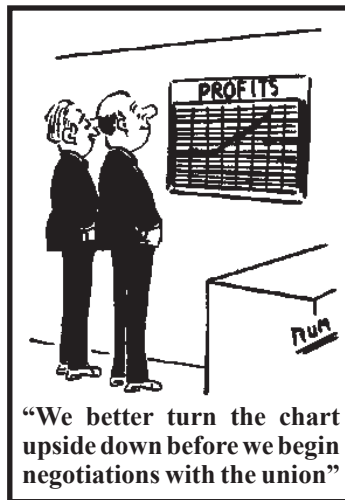
Issue 41, May 21, 2009

DP World Botany gets away with economic blackmail

Economic blackmail works - just ask DP World management at Port Botany. And they got away with it without so much as a hint of an MUA fightback.

DP World have used the economic downturn as an excuse to push for major changes. Twelve maintenance positions – eight servicemen, two fitters and two electricians - have been made redundant. Operations permanents have had their roster “temporarily” changed (for 16 to 64 weeks) to a 35-hour a week with a pro rata pay cut in an effort to increase weekend flexibility and reduce idle time. Supplementaries have missed out on their one year of service upgrade to GWE; and casuals can expect more four-hour (instead of eight-hour) shifts for lashing / unlashing work on ships.

So how did this all happen? If you believe national MUA official Jim Tannock, it was because the union “got on the front foot”. The company approached the MUA with its list of cutbacks and the union response was to negotiate and agree to some cutbacks and lessen the impact of others. If this is getting on the front foot, let's hope Tannock is never forced onto the back foot!



The first of the two MUA yard meetings was held on April Fool's Day and addressed by none other than the General Manager of DP World Port Botany! If letting the boss speak at a union meeting was some sort of April Fool's joke, no one was laughing.

While the boss was given free rein to speak at our union meeting, it seemed like the cat had got the tongues of all of the Sydney Branch MUA officials. Not one of them - including the two Communist Party members - uttered a single word against anything that Tannock had to say. Unity with national MUA officials has once again won out over standing in defence of the interests of the rank and file.

Maritime workers should not be made to pay for the economic downturn. Instead of worrying about their profitability, we have to get on the front foot and challenge the company's “right” to make a profit.

We need to challenge their business secrecy by demanding that the company open its books to inspection by elected union committees. The best way to do this is through building a militant rank & file group based on a program like the one below.

Patrick Port Botany hit by wildcat strike action

Patrick's Port Botany terminal was hit by a wildcat strike on January 29 that called for the reinstatement of sacked Brisbane MUA delegate Paul Patterson. Wharfies at Patrick voted at the start of day shift to walk off site for eight hours, a move which stunned management and held up work on two ships.

Feelings had been running high at Patrick after the bulk and general delegate was sacked in early January. The Patrick labour had previously passed resolutions in favour of taking whatever action they deemed necessary to achieve Patterson's full reinstatement.

However the strike was not authorised by MUA officials. According to the media, MUA leader Paddy Crumlin called the strike a “spontaneous action”.

Patrick / Asciano chief Don Telford called the strike “irresponsible and illegal”.

Those who took part in the wildcat were issued with warning letters, but no other action has been taken against them. At the time of writing it is not known if Paul Patterson has been reinstated or not.

This wildcat strike should be applauded by us all. But in order to maximise the effect of such action in future, the co-ordination and support of *all* Patrick workers and other maritime workers is needed.

Pushing for co-ordination through “official” MUA channels is vital. But “unofficial” co-ordination between delegates & committees may be necessary.

Rich and poor: what causes this inequality?

Only some are lucky in the "lucky country": the richest 1% of Australians own 15-20% of the wealth; the top 5% own 45%; and the top half own 95% of all wealth. So what causes this inequality?

There have not always been rich and poor. For centuries primitive communities shared all of their food and possessions equally.

It was the move to private ownership of land and tools that gave birth to the division of society into social classes and the exploitation of one class by another.

All forms of class society have a productive class which supports the whole of society through its labour, and a dominant class which lives off the work of others.

Slave-owners in Ancient Rome and Greece had their slaves; kings in the Middle Ages lived off the produce of peasant farmers and bosses live off our labour.

IN THE RED CORNER



In Defence of Marxism

Class society gives rise to class struggle - the struggle between the oppressed and the exploiters over who gets what. Spartacus led slave rebellions, peasants revolted in the Middle Ages and workers go on strike.

Inequality arises from the division of society into classes, not individual talent. Class exploitation is the product of the evolution of society, not human nature. Class society has not always existed - and it will not always survive.

[This is the first of a regular column in Vigilance that will explain the ideas of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin & Leon Trotsky].

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.

Vigilance is a socialist bulletin produced for MUA members in Sydney
Authorised by Shane Bentley (MUA - 5019208). Mobile: 0419 278 144
PO Box 1851, Dee Why NSW 2099. Email: vigilancebulletin@hotmail.com

www.vigilancebulletin.org