

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 44, February 28, 2010

MUA delegate Bob Carnegie removed from offshore job

MUA delegate Bob Carnegie was told this February that he was “not required back” on the Ensco 7500 rig. He has been effectively sacked by Chevron, who hired the rig to find North West Shelf gas deposits.

Carnegie was at his home waiting to return to work for his next three-week swing when the labour-hire company employing him, Offshore Marine Services (OMS), told him that Ensco did not want him back.

OMS and Ensco bosses only come clean about his removal after MUA members on the rig took industrial action on February 19 and 20. The bosses explained that Chevron had put Carnegie on a “no fly” list for air transport between the mainland and the island closest to the rig.

Carnegie was removed without formally being sacked, without any official charges, warnings or any written communication.

Soon after starting work on the rig in November last year he became an MUA delegate and chalked up a number of wins over management.

The first was getting a \$75 a day “hard laying” payment for workers on the Ensco 7500 rig in recognition of its excessive noise. The payment is backdated to March 30, 2009 and will continue until the noise issues are satisfactorily resolved. The MUA hailed this win as the first ever hard laying payment for rig workers in the offshore oil and gas industry.

Carnegie helped to win the move from four-week to three-week swings (three weeks of 12-hour shifts, then three weeks off) for the seafarers on the Ensco 7500, which other workers on the rig already had.

He led a union ban that was placed on sub-standard scaffolding used to climb into the rig's temporary living quarters, as workers had previously slipped and injured themselves on it. Management eventually accommodated the seafarers elsewhere.

In early January this year Carnegie intervened after a worker was asked to do some painting unsafely without a proper work platform. Management again backed down after being shown that performing the work in such a manner was against company policy.

On January 18 Carnegie returned home after his three-week swing. After arriving home, he was told by workmates of rumours of his sacking. He immediately contacted MUA officials. Almost two weeks later he was told that there was no flight for him to return to work. He remains on full pay while OMS try to find him other work. They “just” don't have work for him with Chevron and Ensco.

It is now all too common for delegates on the rigs, the ships and the wharves to be victimised and sacked. The MUA needs to serve notice to every maritime employer that, if delegates continue to be discriminated against and sacked for doing their job, we will go into battle to defend them.



Bob Carnegie has been active in the union movement for decades. In 1985 he was the first person jailed during Queensland's bitter SEQEB electricity dispute.

He was Honorary President of the Seamen's Union of Australia Qld Branch (1988-1994); MUA Southern Qld Branch Organiser (1994-1998); and a Builders' Labourers Federation (QLD) organiser (2004-2008).

During the 1998 Patrick dispute he worked with Californian longshore workers to launch the rank-and-file led boycott of the scab-loaded Columbus Canada. International Longshore and Warehouse Union locals 13 & 63 defied secondary boycott laws for 17 days in a genuine act of international solidarity.

Members are encouraged to email resolutions in support of Bob to your MUA branch, the MUA National Office, Bob <bobcarnegie1917@hotmail.com> and the Ensco 7500 crew <muaensco7500@hotmail.com> who have backed Bob up 100 percent.

Dublin dockers “victory” leaves little to celebrate

The long-running dispute at Ireland’s Marine Terminal Limited (MTL) is finally over. After Irish dockers spent 111 days on strike and a further five months out of work, only eleven of the 30 or more dockers made redundant will get their jobs back.

Last year MTL used the financial crisis to justify the first round of redundancies. On July 3, 2009, members of the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) responded with strike action. MTL hit back with anti-strike injunctions and went on to make around two-thirds of the workforce redundant.

The picket line lasted for 16 weeks, but the dockers’ determination to win was undermined by the inaction of SIPTU leaders. Officials used MTL’s injunctions and Ireland’s anti-union laws as excuses to do as little as possible for the strikers. Even SIPTU members who scabbed were allowed to remain in the union.

After union assurances of a victory, the strike ended on October 20, 2009. However, the picket had been called off before the redundancy issue was resolved. After the strike several meetings between MTL and SIPTU took place, but no agreement was reached. Both parties then sought arbitration from the Irish Labour Court, which on January 6 ruled in favour of the company and granted them eight redundancies.

For weeks MTL simply ignored this ruling and refused to rehire anyone, but was forced to renegotiate after dockers voted in February to renew strike action.

The dispute ended on February 18 when MTL agreed to take back eleven dockers. This hollow victory sees most of those made redundant still unemployed.

Ireland’s dock unions were built last century with mass pickets and sympathy strikes. These successful tactics could have also led to victory in 2010.

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.