



QUEENSLAND BRANCH NEWS

NEWSLETTER of the QLD Branch of the MARITIME UNION of AUSTRALIA

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SPECIAL EDITION - Monday 3 August 2015

Hutchison: half the jobs under threat. One out, all in!

ON THURSDAY 30 JULY workers at the Hutchison terminal in Brisbane met and voted unanimously to occupy the terminal if even one of them is sacked.

Hutchison plans to sack half their Australian port workforce - 41 out of 84 in Brisbane, 53 out of 110 in Sydney - and put the rest on short time. If they get away with it, no job in the industry is safe. It's a slow-motion boutique version of what Patricks tried in 1998.

The MUA calls on all members, and all trade unionists, to be ready to support the Hutchison workers with community assemblies at the terminal gate.

Here to stay!

This is the resolution agreed unanimously at the Hutchison workers' meeting on 30 July.

"The workers at Hutchison Ports Australia after considering various reports condemn the Company for their anti-union behaviour and for treating the workforce as mere numbers in the corporate manoeuvres of Hutchison Ports Australia. We are shocked and outraged at the way management have not given the union real information, data or labour modelling with respect to the proposed changes and redundancies in the terminal.

It is of great concern to us that we are being ranked by management like animals and shown no dignity or respect.

We demand the company alter their proposed course and enter into immediate and genuine negotiations with our union representatives and delegates.

With that in mind we demand:

1. The company supply all data and labour modelling to assist gaining and understanding of the real situation in the terminal.
2. We demand a fair, negotiated and objective process if there is any genuine redundancies.
3. We want an absolute right to return to our same jobs if business increases and there is any recruitment into the terminal.
4. We demand that all avenues are explored in averting redundancies and this is done with the MUA and our delegates.
5. We will use all of our international connections to ensure justice for workers at HPA.

6. We will fight to the end if HPA introduces automation without negotiation.

7. We will not accept automation as union busting and Hutchison Ports Australia is on notice.

8. Hutchison Ports Australia must start treating us with dignity and respect.

We will fight Hutchison Ports Australia until they realise we are workers, we are wharfies, we are MUA, and we are here to stay!

Hutchison's plan

Hutchison are giving workers no real information. What they are doing makes no sense unless their plan is to use a partial shutdown to break the union and re-equip the terminals in order to restart on a low-cost basis.

They have given away their biggest contract, KIX, to DP World, "due", they say, "to Hutchison undergoing a complete review of terminal operations in Australia". With poorer equipment and training than D P World or Patricks, they have gained only 3.8% of the traffic, though their target is 30%. They have left a crane unrepaired for months after it was damaged by a dredger. They have already suspended the MUA delegate in Brisbane after a safety dispute. They replaced their local managers five months ago, and plans now are coming straight from their head office in Hong Kong.

They started up here only in 2012. Now they have linked up for a new plan with Filipino-based operator ICTSI, which is building a new terminal in Melbourne to open in December 2016.

MUA will win!

With a 43-year lease in Brisbane and a 30-year lease in Sydney, Hutchison won't walk away. Union power and solidarity can force them to concede that re-equipment and expansion be done under union-negotiated conditions and without loss of jobs.

Sydney solidarity

Workers at the Hutchison terminal in Sydney are meeting on Monday 3 August. The MUA is already liaising closely between Brisbane and Sydney.

Authorised by Bob Carnegie, Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Queensland Branch Secretary

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Global solidarity

MUA Queensland has received a pledge of solidarity from trade unionists in Barcelona, one of Hutchison's biggest European operations.

"On behalf of the 90,000 dockworkers from the International Dockworkers Council, and from our Brothers and Sisters in the Port of Barcelona I would like to send you our full support to your rightful demands with Hutchinson.

Should you need an international support, IDC members will stand ready to back you up by all means necessary. We have already mobilized against Hutchinson in support of the Hong Kong dockworkers, and we will do so if you need our assistance. Solidarity and unity are still our biggest weapons".

The message came from Jordi Aragunde, General Coordinator of the International Dockworkers' Committee, which links trade unionists in Spain, France, the west coast of the USA, and South America.

WA solidarity

Chris Cain, MUA WA secretary and national president, has written to us: "On behalf of all MUA members on the West Coast, I would like to send you our full support for your fight with Hutchison Ports.

"Hutchison should immediately commence genuine negotiations including provision of all relevant data so that members can be part of the solution. Decisions from management without proper engagement and support of the union will inevitably fail and will definitely result in significant disputation.

"The WA Branch will be ready to assist whenever you call on us".

Global capitalism

Hutchison is the world's biggest port operator, with operations from Duisburg in Germany to Buenos Aires, from Karachi to Felixstowe (Britain's busiest port), from Busan in Korea to Barcelona. They benchmark globally. They know and follow models like Cosco in Piraeus (see next story).

Benchmark Greece

One of the measures forced on the Greek government by the capitalist Eurozone leaders is privatisation of the ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki.

Likely bidders are Maersk, ICTSI, and the Chinese company Cosco, which already runs two of three container quays at Piraeus on a 35 year contract. Hutchison tried for Thessaloniki when there was previous talk of privatising it, in 2008.

Cosco's contract at Piraeus has been successful for Cosco. Traffic has grown to three million teu; Piraeus is now Europe's eighth busiest container port; Cosco plans a fourth quay to expand to six million teu. The quay not yet contracted out at Piraeus has strong union

organisation. Its traffic has stagnated while Cosco's quays thrive with no union recognition and no collective bargaining. Workers who tentatively formed a "workers' committee" were sacked.

The Cosco workers are mostly employed by subcontractors or subcontractors of subcontractors. Most are on 24 hour call, with only a few hours' notice of shifts, no overtime pay, and paid around €600 (\$900) a month.

They have no meal breaks, not even toilet breaks: managers tell them to urinate into the sea or take cups with them. "Bouncers" patrol the quays.

Hutchison's Hong Kong model

In Hutchison's home port, Hong Kong, wharfies struck for 40 days in 2013 to win a 9.8% pay rise and some improvements in conditions.

Employment had been outsourced to subcontractors. Pay hadn't been increased for years. Shifts were up to 24 hours long. Breaks were scanty. Even a non-striker called up by the bosses to tell the media things weren't so bad said: "In fact, we have short breaks of two to three minutes between vessels berthing at the terminals. Very rarely can I get 15 to 30 minutes. We also take turns to have meals so that we have around 15 to 20 minutes for mealtimes".

Tugs

Jason Miners and Bob Carnegie are to meet with tug members on the Queensland East Coast this coming week: Gladstone, Mackay, Abbot Point, Townsville and Cairns. The purpose of this tour of the two officials is to meet members from all ports and also discuss with management and delegates local and national EBA issues.

Patricks EBA

The MUA Patricks Part A negotiating committee met in Sydney on 27-28 July. Part B is set down for meetings on 13th and 17th of this month. Talks are still in the preliminary stage.

DP World EBA

The agonisingly slow DP World Part A negotiations are at the precipice. Either our just claims will be settled this week or protected action will occur. The Brisbane Part B team met with DP World management all day on Friday and will meet again this coming Friday.

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