

MUA QLD holds successful first ever Branch Conference

THE MUA QLD Branch held its first ever Branch Conference on December 3 and 4. From all accounts, the well organised and informative conference was a great success. This edition of *Branch News* contains two reports on our Branch Conference - a short report from the International Dockworkers Council (IDC) and a more in-depth report from the MUA's Ashleigh Telford.

The IDC Attends the Queensland Branch Conference in Brisbane and Celebrates their Affiliation into the IDC!

THE first international conference organized by the MUA Queensland Branch has taken place in Brisbane on 3 and 4 December. The conference brought together relevant union leaders at the international, national and MUA level.

The IDC participated in the conference with two speeches from Jordi Aragunde, Anthony and Manuel Lanon Tetard on automation and solidarity, and Ken Riley and Mark Bass on dock work in the East Coast of the United States. After the IDC speeches, the MUA Queensland Branch has officially signed their affiliation to the IDC with 800 members.

An IDC delegation including the IDC General Coordinator, Jordi Aragunde, East Coast Coordinator, Ken Riley accompanied by Mark Bass from the ILA Mobile, European Zone Coordinator, Anthony Tetard and Manuel Lanon, IDC Health and

Safety Coordinator, attended the MUA Queensland Branch conference: "EDUCATE-AGITATE-ORGANISE" held in Brisbane during the 3rd and 4th of December.

The conference comes after the hard struggle of MUA members against Hutchinson has come to an end. After the dismissal by text message of 97 dockers in Brisbane and Port Botany and a long dispute lasting 102 days, the MUA has finally settled an agreement with the company.

The Queensland Branch has organized a fantastic conference that tackles many labor issues in

Australia and worldwide. The conference has gathered both international speakers, and from the MUA, with the report of QLD Branch Secretary, Bob Carnegie, MUA National Secretary and ITF President, Paddy Crumlin, and MUA WA Branch Secretary and National President, Christy Cain, amongst others.

Other labor activist and trade union leaders have also been present at the conference, such as Dave Smith who has spoken on the battle against trade union blacklisting in Britain. The IDC speeches on the first day of the conference have addressed important issues such as "solidarity in the age of automation" and "the Right to work, union busting and racism, organizing dockworkers on the US East Coast".

Also, at midday on the 3rd of December, the MUA QLD Branch has announced and has signed its official affiliation of 800 members into the IDC!

We welcome the MUA QLD Branch into the IDC!



Educate Agitate and Organise: Inaugural Queensland Conference

FROM Queensland safety regulations to international solidarity a vast array of speakers proved for a successful conference and educational experience for delegates at the inaugural State Branch Conference.

With the theme of 'Educate, Agitate and Organise' delegates from all over the sunshine state joined guests from other branches and around the world to partake in the two-day conference held at the Queensland Council of Unions in South Brisbane.

After a Welcome to Country, including a didgeridoo performance, QCU Secretary Ros McLennan opened proceedings praising the Maritime Union of Australia's achievements and reputation.

McLennan said the MUA was "revered in the union movement" and was "anchored by the values of fairness and equality."

Branch Secretary Bob Carnegie, whose impressive resume was iterated by Deputy Branch Secretary and emcee Jason Miners, took to the podium in talking about the importance and meaning of solidarity.

He said solidarity was an important and selfless expression.

"Solidarity is about reciprocity," Carnegie said.

"You give and give, and then give again, and every time you give it will eventually end up coming back to you."

National Secretary Paddy Crumlin spoke about the numerous challenges the union was facing but did so with optimism.

"The injustices workers are facing here in Australia and around the world are growing but if we organise in our own right we can overcome, defeat and change the system," Crumlin said.

"One of the great things about the union movement is despite difference is that we can take on the neo-liberal forces together.

"The war against workers is the war against humanity and we've got to get to protecting the workers because it's on us."

MUA President and WA Branch Secretary Christy Cain was also invited to speak and used his opportunity to tell delegates that being a member of the MUA was not just a matter of paying dues, it was also about taking part in the fight.

CFMEU officials were also present in force with local Assistant Secretary Jade Ingham joined by Construction National Secretary Dave Noonan and WA Assistant Secretary Joe McDonald.

Noonan was invited to speak on the Trade Union Royal Commission, as the CFMEU had been a focal point of the ideological campaign.

Although the Commission was a political witch-hunt, he said, there were still some things that had to be learned from the experience and some things that had to be changed within the union movement.

Noonan's speech inevitably ended up becoming a

discussion about the potential merger and the benefits such a move would bring.

"If you do come along with us, we won't diminish the MUA," he said. "We're in



it together, In spirit, in heart and, in militancy."

International solidarity was a particular focus on day one with a number of speakers from the International Dockworkers Council, including its international coordinator Jordi Aragunde, who was an important character in the recent Hutchison dispute.

Barcelona dockworker Aragunde, who was joined by comrades from France's National Federation of Ports and Docks - Anthony Tetard and Manuel Lanon - talked about the importance of the world's wharfies working together to defend against the hold shipping consortia have on ports.

"Shipping lines work together, as one, to strangle and break port labour, we have to follow their example, work in solidarity to ensure they can't break us," he said.

The European panel was followed by inspirational speeches from two representatives from the USA's International Longshore Association, Mark Bass and Ken Riley. Both of these men are based in Southern American states where conservatism is rampant and therefore the stranglehold on unions and workers in general is constant.

Bass spoke from a local context, about how long held conditions such as employer-provided health care are being attacked. Meanwhile, Riley spoke about an IDC campaign in Paraguay wherein a couple of days sacked port workers had been reinstated.

Following the international speakers, Bob Carnegie, signed the branch up to be an affiliate of the IDC.

Continuing the international theme, Maritime Union of New Zealand Secretary Joe Fleetwood

spoke about the pivotal Ports of Auckland campaign and about the challenges of bringing people back into the union.

Maritime International Federation boss and former Deputy National Secretary Mick Doleman spoke about the recent inroads in the federation and about the awful safety regimes of some of

Australia's closest neighbours. He told a story about four wharfies being killed in Timor Leste within weeks of each other with little recourse.

A rousing presentation came from Jeff Rickett, a labour historian who talked about the importance of unions over the past two centuries.

Dave Smith, from the UK's Blacklist Support Group also flew in to deliver a speech on history, which outlined in detail the extent that neo-liberal Governments work with police and big corporations to squash activists.

The Blacklist is no longer officially in place, however Smith said not much had changed and that unionists continue to be targeted in the UK today.

The ACTU's Sally McManus was also on hand to talk about the Build a Better Future campaign and enlist support going forward from delegates.

"It's not just about defeating the Liberals, it's about changing the direction of Australia, McManus said.

Her speech was complemented by the ETU's Peter Simpson who talked about the successful Not 4 Sale campaign which played a huge role in the defeat of the one-term Campbell Newman LNP State Government.

On day two reports were delivered from the different sections of the branch - Veterans, which was delivered by Col Davies whose wife had also provided a union quilt, while Ann Gray spoke on

behalf of the women's committee and Mick O'Shane talked about the struggles of the State's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

They were followed by a panel of lawyers who spoke about a range of legal issues,

including the increasing criminalisation of industrial action, workers' compensation and Seacare, and fighting for victims exposed to dangerous substances such as asbestos.

Protect also delivered a presentation on being looked after, outside of work, as well as at work.

The afternoon was taken up by a safety session which covered off maritime and Queensland safety laws and was presented by union education officer Scott Wilson and MUA Safety Officer Matt Goodwin.



**MUA QLD Branch joins the International Dockworkers' Council
(L to R) Glenn Desmond, Paul Gallagher, Anthony Tetard, Manuel Lanon, Jason Miners, Jordi Aragunde, Mark Bass**

Following the session delegates broke in the groups and the day was finished by formulating branch resolutions and other resolutions to take to the upcoming National Conference.

The well-thought out agenda was only diverted from twice for important timely matters, one of which was lending support for the Brisbane Ferry workers who were fighting tooth-and-nail to get an EBA.

On the morning and afternoon of day one, delegates made their way down to the ferry terminal on Southbank in a show of solidarity.

Organising the workers on the ferry had been one of the branch's recent success stories, membership had more than doubled on the City Cat ferries since the ascension of the new leadership team, who in addition to Bob Carnegie and Jason Miners, included Assistant Branch Secretary Paul Gallagher and organisers Paul Petersen and Glenn Desmond.

The other time the conference went off agenda was to tell the story of a group of Fijian workers who had been holed up on a tug in drydock in Brisbane for months, without their correct pay and were facing deportation from Australia.

International Transport Workers' Federation Queensland inspector Sarah Maguire told the room about their plight and there was no hesitation in people reaching into their pockets.

A couple of thousand dollars were raised from delegates and the WA Branch and Sydney Branch also offered a further thousand dollars each from their respective branch funds.



Branch News – see you next year

THIS is the last edition of the Queensland Branch News for 2015. The next issue will appear early next year. On behalf of all the MUA QLD officials, organisers and office staff, we wish our readers all the best for the Christmas / New Year period.

Office Hours – Xmas and New Year

BRISBANE MUA office opening hours will be:

Thursday December 24: 8am-12.30pm

Friday December 25: Closed

Monday December 28: Closed

Tuesday Dec. 29:

8am-12.30pm

Wed. Dec. 30:

8am-12.30pm

Thursday Dec. 31:

8am-12.30pm

Friday January 1:

Closed

Monday Jan. 4:

8am-4pm (as

normal)

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