



QUEENSLAND BRANCH NEWS

NEWSLETTER of the QLD Branch of the MARITIME UNION of AUSTRALIA

73 SOUTHGATE AVE., CANNON HILL 4170 - Phone: (07) 3395 7215 - Fax: (07) 3395 7688 - Email: muaqld@mua.org.au

To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing - Raymond Williams No. 108 – 24 November 2017

Branch Conference - Patrick Members Outstanding Support for Oaky Creek Miners – Toll EBA Gladstone Tugs - Picnic Day – First Unmanned Vessel Joins UK Ship Register - Book Corner

Queensland Branch Conference 2017



Report of the 'Get Wise, Organise' Queensland Branch Biennial Conference

Global Solidarity Conference: Injecting Class Politics

– by Janet Burstall – photos by Mike Barber

THE THREAT OF massive job losses from automation on the wharves is a worldwide concern addressed at the Queensland MUA international conference. Professor Raquel Varela from Portugal explained that the decision by owners to introduce robots is both political and economic, and can be contested and beaten. There is not one single fully automated port in the world, robots have not yet achieved the same rate of unloading as worker operated machinery, and they are a very expensive investment that often relies on public subsidies. Her solutions to the threat of loss of jobs to robots include shorter working time hours without reducing salaries, and putting technology under the control of workers, not the dictatorship of the port owner.



Raquel Varela speaking at the conference

She challenged casualisation and company power to demand profits, saying “we don’t have kids and houses for 3 months of the year, so why should we only work 3 months of the year? If we have no salary we have no way

to live. If the bosses do not have the same profits all the time, this will not question their life, their dignity. The right to have a profit is not the same as the right to have a salary.” Jason Miners, Deputy Branch Secretary, declared Raquel Varela’s presentation to be “the best injection of class politics into a conference that I have ever heard.”



Queensland MUA delegates learned about the vast differences around the world in freedom to organise, working conditions and threats to livelihoods when they heard in person from International Dockworkers Council branch delegates from Belgium, Spain, Argentina, France, USA, and from the Hong Kong Dockers Union, the Confederation of Congress of Indonesian Alliance of Unions (KASBI) and the International Transport Federation.



Members were gob smacked when a Hong Kong dock worker described 24 hour shifts for Hutchison on cranes with a piss pot on board. In both Hong Kong and Argentina, trade unionists have “disappeared”. Terribly low pay in Indonesia and Hong Kong was shocking. The IDC delegate from Le Havre in France was applauded when he said that workers at his port will not allow full

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

73 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill QLD 4170

automation. The potential for international solidarity was made clear, and commitment to that solidarity visibly grew over the two-day conference.

Danger of serious injury and death at work was another common theme across the world discussed, with reports of recent serious incidents and a national report on what can be achieved through safety committees.



Minister Bailey and Peter Ong MUA Qld Conference 2017

“It’ll be grim under Tim” Nicholls if Labor loses the Queensland election. Peter Ong of the ETU, Ros McLennan of the QCU, David Greene of the MUA and the Qld MUA-backed candidate for the seat of Everton, and Labor Minister Mark Bailey all made the case for a Labor vote. Peter Ong recounted how the ETU had fought both Bligh Labor and Newman LNP governments to stop electricity privatisation, and ended up in hot debate about the value of affiliation to the ALP. ETU members decided to remain affiliates in order to get commitments to ETU policies and pro-union election candidates, as well as continuing public campaigns regardless of Labor election prospects.



Ros McLennan and David Greene addressing the conference

Professor David Peetz from Griffith University provided some figures and research on declining union density that suggested the best antidote to declining membership that unions could use right now is to make sure that delegates are part of democratic union decision-making, and effective activists in every workplace. Christy Cain from Western Australia reported some success in forming a young workers’ group within the MUA, and the NSW Branch is also trying this out.



Ged Kearney brought solidarity greetings from Australian Unions, and spoke about the new ‘Change the Rules’ campaign, asking everyone to complete the online survey for it.

A major component of Change the Rules is to restore legal rights for unions to organise and strike. Dave Noonan from the CFMEU and barrister Peter Morrissey SC also highlighted the problems of criminalising

industrial action and why unions should resist the law and order agenda in electoral politics.

Solidarity collections to support workers locked out for over 132 days at North Oaky by Glencore raised over \$2800, to top up donations that had already been made by MUA Branches around Australia. And the MUA Queensland Branch is co-ordinating members to drive up to the North Oaky picket line.

Lots more than this happened at the conference, which is a great step forward for education, agitation,



Branch Secretary, Bob Carnegie

organisation and working-class solidarity. In closing the conference Queensland Branch Secretary, Bob Carnegie quoted American socialist, Eugene Debs:

“The labor movement is the child of slavery—the offspring of oppression—in revolt against the misery and suffering that gave it birth. Its splendid growth is the marvel of our time, the forerunner of freedom, the hope of mankind.

Ten thousand times has the labor movement stumbled and fallen and bruised itself, and risen again; been seized by the throat and choked and clubbed into insensibility; enjoined by courts, assaulted by thugs, charged by the militia, shot down by regulars, traduced by the press, frowned upon by public opinion, deceived by politicians, threatened by priests, repudiated by renegades, preyed upon by grafters, infested by spies, deserted by cowards, betrayed by traitors, bled by leeches, and sold out by leaders, but, notwithstanding all this, and all these, it is today the most vital and potential power this planet has ever known, and its historic mission of emancipating the workers of the world from the thralldom of the ages is as certain of ultimate realization as the setting of the sun. The most vital thing about this world movement is its educational propaganda-its capacity and power to shed light in the brain of the working class, arouse them from their torpor, develop their faculties for thinking, teach

them their economic class interests, effect their solidarity, and imbue them with the spirit of the impending social revolution.”

Patrick Terminal Members Outstanding Support for Oaky North Miners *by Bob Carnegie*

OUR MEMBERS AT Patricks Terminal have donated over \$2000 to the Oaky North miners in their David vs Goliath struggle against the world’s largest commodity trader in Glencore.

The 190 miners are all members of the CFMEU Mining Division and deserve our unwavering support.

The Branch congratulates our members at Patricks for their donation to working class solidarity and showing that the slogan “an injury to one is an injury to all” means as much today as it did 110 years ago when it was created.

Toll EBA *by Bob Carnegie*

THE TOLL/AMRUN EBA is being discussed at the moment. The Branch is attempting to get shorter swings, income protection and financial planning as part of the Agreement.

The Agreement needs to be very tightly scoped and it needs to have a clear end date.

Members will be kept up to date with a series of meetings planned in the near future.

Gladstone Tugs Donation



Gladstone MUA tug boat members have proudly donated \$2000 to Glenn Butcher ALP campaign for Gladstone. Glenn Butcher and the ALP are the only party who will not sell the government owned Gladstone Ports Corporation. Glenn has been in his time, as the incumbent state member, an avid supporter of unions.

In Solidarity - Gladstone Tugs MUA members

Family Picnic Day *by Jason Miners*

THE ANNUAL FAMILY day was held on Melbourne Cup day, Tuesday 7 November. There was an excellent turn out of members and their families who enjoyed the day. The races were hotly contested and a delicious lunch was had by all.



Barry, Bernie and Trevor – thank you

We would like to thank the many members and family members who volunteered on the day to help with the set up, packing of sample bags, cooking, serving and pack up. These people include: Paul Williams, Trevor and Gina Munday, Barry Payne, Bernie Sanders, Cherie Holman, Mark and Deb Cowan, Laurie Horgan and Meredith.



Hot dog anyone?? Thanks to Paul



Glenn and Jason Miners, Deputy Branch Secretary



We would also like to thank the following organisations for their donations: Unity Bank, RT Health and Maritime Super.

First Unmanned Vessel Joins UK Ship Register

Sourced from: <http://worldmaritimeneeds.com/archives/235207/first-unmanned-vessel-joins-uk-ship-register/>

The UK Ship Register has signed its first-ever unmanned vessel to the flag.

As explained, the move shows how the register “is adapting to the changes of the maritime industry.” ASV’s C-Worker 7 will be used for work such as subsea positioning, surveying and environmental monitoring. It

can be used under direct control, semi-manned or completely unmanned.

Although such autonomous vessels are now being introduced to many fleets in both commercial and military sectors across the world, they are still relatively new in the maritime sector, according to the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).



First unmanned vessel joins UK ship register
Image courtesy ASV

“By supporting emerging technologies such as autonomous systems, we are helping to keep the UK at the forefront of the global maritime industry,” Doug Barrow, Director UK Ship Register, said.

“The UK Flag is growing, as we have invested in resources to meet the demands of that growth. We have the support of the UK Government, and the wider UK maritime industries to continue our expansion,” Barrow added.

“We are delighted to have achieved the first registration of a semi-autonomous vessel for maritime operations. The MCA has been critical in enabling ASV to reach this pivotal milestone recognising the prominence of unmanned systems in the maritime environment,” Vince Dobbin, Sales and Marketing Director of ASV Global, said.

Book Corner

by Craig Buckley Qld/NT Branch Industrial Officer AMIEU



Threepenny Novel was the only novel completed by the German playwright and poet, Bertolt Brecht. Set in Britain during the early years of the 20th Century, at the time of the Boer War, the book seeks to expose the nature of capitalist society. MacHeath is a gangster attempting to establish himself as a

respectable businessman, only to find that the “legitimate” world of business and finance is every bit as crooked, corrupt and dishonest as the life he is trying to put behind him. Populated by characters from his play, *The Threepenny Opera* (“J.J. Peachum – the Beggar’s Friend,” “Polly,” “Jenny,” “Commissioner Brown,” and

of course, “Mack the Knife”), Brecht presents a complex story as businessmen with rival interests plot to ensure their success by bringing about their rivals’ collapse. Their schemes ultimately threaten to bring everyone undone. MacHeath achieves his happy end by forcing his rivals to accept that collusion, rather than competition, will secure greater profits for them all. Only a poor, disabled beggar (the ex-soldier, Fewkoombey), realises – and all too late – who is paying the price of the capitalists’ success.

The complicated scheming engaged in by the characters means this is not really a book that you can pick up and put down at intervals, as our reading group discovered. Hopefully that will not deter potential readers, because in Brecht’s very direct, blunt writing there is a great deal of humour and satire to be found. The book is out of print, and hard to find. Although not of the greatest quality, there is however a (free) PDF version available at this url: https://ia601603.us.archive.org/17/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.149235/2015.149235.Threepenny-Novel_text.pdf

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Branch Officials Details

QLD Branch Secretary Bob Carnegie
Mob: 0439 478 996
Email: bob.carnegie@mua.org.au

QLD Deputy Branch Secretary Jason Miners
Mob: 0401 211 866
Email: jason.miners@mua.org.au

QLD Assistant Branch Secretary Paul Gallagher
Mob: 0408 494 168
Email: paul.gallagher@mua.org.au

QLD Organiser Paul Petersen
Mob: 0404 453 869
Email: paul.petersen@mua.org.au

