



QUEENSLAND BRANCH NEWS

NEWSLETTER of the QLD Branch of the MARITIME UNION of AUSTRALIA

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To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing - Raymond Williams No. 111 – 20 December 2017

End of Year Wrap Up - Trump 'World Champion of Extreme Inequality' – Poet's Corner - Book Review Cartoon Corner – Christmas Office Hours

End of Year Wrap Up by Bob Carnegie – Branch Secretary

ALL THE BEST for the festive season and may 2018 be a year of peace, good health and prosperity.

The following is a very brief report of some of the work the Branch and members have been involved in over the year. No doubt workplaces and areas have been missed out and my sincere apologies for that.

As 2017 comes to a close it is time to reflect on it. For the MUA Queensland Branch it has been both a busy and difficult year.

For our waterside workers we were able to play an important part in securing national and local Agreements in both Patrick Terminals and Qube. Both these sites are well run with experienced delegates and workplace leaders playing a critical role.

Qube have seen an uplift in work after a long period of downturn in Bulk and General area.

The situation at DP World has been, at times, a difficult one however our members there through fine work by delegates such as Macca, Aaron, Bill and Craig and other great comrades have played a prominent role in achieving wage justice for the VSE's nationally and for issues such as sick leave cashed in for workers in the maintenance area. This is only to mention a tiny portion of the great work they do for the membership in that terminal.

At Linx, the membership in Brisbane and Gladstone are close to seeing a new EBA delivered. Both of these sites also have exceptional delegates and workplace leaders.

At Hutchison we see the company continually attempting to erode conditions and our members fighting back. Hutchison is a much younger workforce than at other terminals and their enthusiasm in areas outside of their own workplace and for social and other union causes give rise to great hope.



Members at the last Branch Monthly Meeting for 2017

In our Maintenance areas at ATIVO and Kalmar, there are some difficulties. Ativo, with outstanding delegates Shaun and Brett leading the charge for the members are close to an Agreement. However we are finding difficulties with management honouring agreed to positions and we hope that will be addressed early in the

new year.

Kalmar members are in the process of putting together a Log of Claims. Our delegate Steve, is doing his very best in a difficult environment.

In Townsville after two years of negotiations the NSS EBA is in the last stages of drafting, Great work has been done by the Committee, Paul Gallagher and the

exceptional leadership role of Bernie Farrelly has gone a long way into getting this very difficult negotiations up. TBSH in Townsville has been taken over by Flinders Ports, it is a strong well led group of wharfies with 100% union membership.

In the towage area, in which Jason Miners has the lead position, a National EBA was concluded with Smit which delivered an outstanding training package and some other conditions.

Smit have announced they are pulling out of Brisbane and we are currently arguing with both Svitzer and Smit about this.

Currently the Branch and the union nationally is having many problems with Svitzer as outlined in previous Branch News.

The Branch has touched hands with Smit over the Amrun Agreement in Weipa which hopefully will deliver good paying, long term jobs to members.

In Dredging the Balder R was out in Queensland for a few months, the Branch negotiated a very decent Agreement whilst it was here plus increased the crewing

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

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level of the vessel thus creating some work for unemployed members.

The Port of Brisbane owned dredge, *Brisbane*, had its EBA re negotiated and a fair Agreement struck. Thanks to the delegate and crew for their support.

In Ferries, Paul Petersen reports that the Sealink Agreement in Gladstone is close to finalisation.

In Brisbane, the Ferries EBA comes up for negotiation in early 2018. The delegates have been working hard to put up a strong claim so we can achieve some wage justice for our ferry workers.

Ausport Marine in Brisbane concluded its EBA this year. Ausport has a grouping of very committed trade unionists in a climate of competing with non union operators.

For our Merchant Seafaring members, 2017 saw a further decline in job opportunities with the collapse of our Merchant Fleet. This is the number one concern of our Branch and why we place such importance on the Rio Campaign we will launch once the ASP EBA is put to bed. On that note it is very close to being put to members.

The Branch will also be organising a major campaign and actions against CSL for their actions in throwing Australian Merchant Seafarers on the scrap heap.

The Inpex Project has seen the engagement of some unemployed members however we are seeing members with a record of being decent trade unionists or being mature finding it very difficult to get a start. We will keep fighting for them.

In Toll Shipping, the Branch is getting close to an Agreement.

Sea Swift, after many meetings, a deal had been reached. However, as to be expected, Sea Swift is trying every legal avenue to thwart or delay the Agreement being put into place.

The Branch has been in preliminary discussions with an operator who wants to start a shipping service from Brisbane to Townsville. Should this get off the ground it will create jobs for seafarers and wharfies.

On the general political and other broad areas, the Branch has been involved in, the most important was our biennial 'Get Wise Organise' Conference. It was a huge success by all accounts. A Conference of thought and activity. Special thanks to Damien McGarry for the countless hours he put into getting the event together.

On the ALP front, the Branch's influence continues to grow. Although David Greene was not successful in Everton he put up a magnificent campaign. He had to endure a vicious campaign by the ultra right conservatives who support Tim Mander and who flooded the electorate with character assassinating propaganda against David.

David's work as our legal industrial officer continues to be of the highest standard.

2018 will be a year of battles, as every year is. We need members to become more involved in the broad social

and political issues the Branch so proudly involves itself in. We need the good work done on the job to be broadened out. A revitalised Activists Committee is being organised by Paul Petersen and this is important for all of us.

To conclude I'd like to thank, Jason Miners, Paul Gallagher and Paul Petersen for their work through the

year. To our administration staff of Carol and Kerri, you have done us proud. However most importantly I want to thank rank and file members for not losing the faith and sticking with the union through these difficult times. Bring on 2018!



Trump Turning US Into 'World Champion of Extreme Inequality', UN Envoy Warns

Special rapporteur Philip Alston, fresh from fact-finding tour, issues devastating critique of US society and condemns 'private wealth and public squalor' by Ed Pilkington



Philip Alston visits a homeless camp in Downtown LA. Alston said: 'The persistence of extreme poverty is a political choice made by those in power. With political will, it could readily be eliminated.' Photograph: Dan Tuffs

The American Dream is Rapidly Becoming the American Illusion

THE UNITED NATIONS monitor on poverty and human rights has [issued a devastating report](#) on the condition of America, accusing Donald Trump and the Republican leadership in Congress of attempting to turn the country into the "world champion of extreme inequality".

Philip Alston, the UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, has completed a two-week [official tour](#) of the US by releasing an excoriating attack on the direction of the nation. Not only does he warn that the [tax bill currently being rushed through Congress](#) will hugely increase already large disparities between rich and poor, he accuses Trump and his party of consciously distorting the shape of American society in a "bid to become the most unequal society in the world".

“American exceptionalism was a constant theme in my conversations,” he writes. “But instead of realizing its founders’ admirable commitments, today’s United States has proved itself to be exceptional in far more problematic ways that are shockingly at odds with its immense wealth and its founding commitment to human rights. As a result, contrasts between private wealth and public squalor abound.”

In his most stark message, Alston warns that the Republicans’ [declared intent](#) to slash crucial welfare programs next year in order to pay for some of the \$1.5tn tax cuts could cost American lives. “The consequences for an already overstretched and inadequate system of social protection are likely to be fatal for many programs, and possibly also for those who rely upon them,” he writes.

Alston’s piercing findings present the Trump administration with a challenge. The charge that the US president is actively seeking to harm millions of Americans may be difficult to ignore, given that the report carries the imprimatur of the UN human rights council in Geneva.

Trump has frequently been dismissive of the world body, [complaining](#) during the 2016 presidential campaign that “we get nothing out of the United Nations other than good real-estate prices”. But he has also shown himself to have a thin skin when it comes to criticism of him or his administration. At a press conference launching his preliminary report in Washington, Alston quipped about possible Trump reaction: “I’m hoping for a tweet”.

Bernie Sanders, the US senator who has led the debate on inequality, has waded into the fray. He met the UN monitor on Friday and sounded his own alarm about the future of the country. Sanders said that as the “wealthiest country in the history of the world” the US should be providing a model in how to treat all of its citizens with dignity. “Sadly that is not the case. We are moving into 2018 – we should not be living in a country with 41 million people living in poverty and so many more in extreme poverty, and nobody even talks about it.”

Alston invited Paul Ryan to meet him but was told the Republican speaker of the House was too busy.



LA resident Ressa, who is homeless. Alston will produce a final report next May, which will then go before the UN human rights council. Photograph: Dan Tuffis

In his 15-day fact-finding mission, Alston, an Australian academic and law professor at New York University, visited Los Angeles and San Francisco, Alabama, Georgia, Puerto Rico and West Virginia, talking to low-income families as well as governmental officials. He will produce a final report next May and that in turn will go before the UN human rights council.

Alston takes a strip out of the US for what he suggests are its double standards over human rights. The Trump administration, in line with previous US governments, preaches about human rights to other countries while refusing to be bound itself by international rules.

“The US is alone among developed countries in insisting that while human rights are of fundamental importance, they do not include rights that guard against dying of hunger, dying from a lack of access to affordable healthcare, or growing up in a context of total deprivation. But denial does not eliminate responsibility or negate obligations.”

Alston is also scathing about the attitudes of some of the politicians and officials he met on his tour, who subscribe to what he calls the caricature of rich people as industrious and entrepreneurial and poor people as “wasters, losers and scammers”.

He writes: “Some politicians and political appointees with whom I spoke were completely sold on the narrative of such scammers sitting on comfortable sofas, watching color TVs, while surfing on their smartphones, all paid for by welfare. I wonder how many of these politicians have ever visited poor areas, let alone spoken to those who dwell there.”

At the press conference, Alston said that current US trends were undermining democracy. “Democracy is the foundation stone upon which this country is built, the contribution of which it has been most proud internationally. And yet what we see is the lowest voter turnouts in any developed country.”

He pointed to the disenfranchisement of former prisoners, as well as covert voter suppression efforts such as the imposition of voter ID requirements as examples of the way the political rights of low-income people were being eroded.

Latest figures put the number of Americans living in poverty at 41 million – almost 13% of the population. Of those, almost half (19 million) are living in deep poverty, defined as having a total family income that is below one-half of the poverty threshold.

In a report packed with depressing evidence, the UN rapporteur tries to give a positive spin to his findings, saying that with the wealth that abounds in the US the country is in a position to solve its poverty and inequality crisis. “The persistence of extreme poverty is a political choice made by those in power. With political will, it could readily be eliminated.”

In a phrase that might reverberate around Capitol Hill and the White House, Alston concludes: “The American Dream is rapidly becoming the American Illusion since

the US now has the lowest rate of social mobility of any of the rich countries.” Sourced from:

https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/15/america-un-extreme-poverty-trump-republicans?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Poet's Corner by cMc

Written in Sydney tied up at garden island onboard the Ocean Shield

Bream hover

Suspended in the viscous briny about the bow,
City lights shift and bend in the slick grease of ebb tide
And a currawong chortles above early morning city noise
As dawn peels electric blue through a dark bank of cloud
Then reveals pale and golden on the brassy nub of centre
point tower

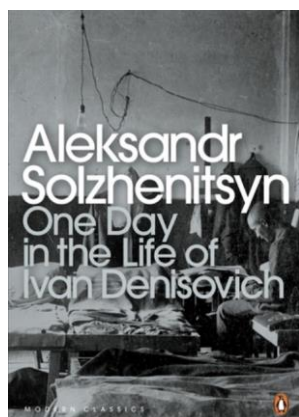
While navy men,

Bent against the cold,

go by with hands buried deep in pockets.

Doomed to dull grey alleyways.

Book Review



One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 1962

Review by Allan Gardiner

FRANKLY, I LIKED the film version (1970), available on YouTube, better than the novel itself. The movie's images of claustrophobic work gangs amid limitless Siberian steppes vividly tell the story without needing to go into

Denisovich's every action in a single day.

Khrushchev promoted this novel in the hope that it would discredit his old guard enemies. In fact, Khrushchev was chucked out soon after. Khrushchev's minimalist criticism -- that Stalin had created a 'cult of personality' -- is inadequate in the face of Solzhenitsyn's exposure of the corrupt prison camp system that, despite its shocking injustice and inefficiency, build a vast amount of infrastructure for the Soviet state. Naturally, pro-capitalist propagandists sprang upon this novel with glee. An example of this can also be found on YouTube in the form of a US black and white film version (1963) that contains more anti-Soviet cliches than content from the novel.

Solzhenitsyn's actual critique in the book reminds me more of Tolstoy's belief in the supposed virtues of peasant self-interestedness and small-mindedness. Denisovich is not as admirable to the reader as he clearly is to the book's author, for whom he is partially an autobiographical stand-in. Ironically, the driving force that keeps the prisoners alive in Solzhenitsyn's account is better explained by Karl Marx, who described how workers steal back moments of unalienated labour from those who try to turn them into mere tools of production.

Cartoon Corner

Leunig perfectly captures Branch Secretary, Bob Carnegie after some recent negotiations.



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Christmas Office Hours

Please note the Branch office will be closed from 12.00 noon, Friday 22 December 2017 and will reopen at 8.00am, Tuesday 2 January 2018.

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