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. 112 – 5 January 2018**

Meeting with Ports Minister - Linx Brisbane Part B - Oaky Creek Mine - Meeting Room Redesign - Outsourcing A Preview of the US Without Pensions - Greece Sold the Thessaloniki Port For 1.1 bln - Poets Corner

Meeting with Ports Minister

BRANCH SECRETARY, BOB Carnegie, and delegates representing members from Svitzer and Smit Tugs met with Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Mark Bailey, along with the Director General of Queensland Transport and Main Roads, Neil Scales OBE, and the head of Maritime Safety Queensland, Captain Patrick Quirk, over our very real safety and operational concerns relating to Svitzer taking over the towage work of Smit without any proposed increase in tugs and associated crew. Assistant National Secretary, Ian Bray, along with Deputy Queensland Branch Secretary, Jason Miners (who is on leave) came in by telephone.

L-R: David Greene, Peter Blake, Jason Steen, Minister Mark Bailey, Bob Carnegie, John Atkins, David McIntosh

The meeting was a robust and honest one. We put our cards squarely on the table. The delegates did an exceptional job of putting the case of the members they represent firmly and straight-forward to the Minister. All in all, it was a worthwhile and productive meeting.

Linx Brisbane Part B Negotiations

THE BRISBANE LINX delegates Dave Thorn, Brett Membrey, Peter Franchina, Shane Medcalf, Mark Barnes, Shane Jeffries, Phil Taylor and Glen Speake have all been working hard to ensure all Linx members get the best outcome possible from the Part B Brisbane negotiations.

Unfortunately, there are a few non-members at Linx Brisbane who choose not to contribute but seek the benefits of a good outcome.

Back in July last year, the company tried to go on a culling exercise, calling for 19 positions to be made redundant, stating the company was unstainable with such high fixed cost.

After conducting a labour review and crunching the numbers, the members and the committee decided to try and mitigate the situation by introducing a Permanent Irregular Roster (PIR) for the six remaining permanent members at Linx and bring the PGE's back to GWE's (GWE's accumulate leave entitlements at a pro-rata rate).

This encouraged the company to reduce the number of redundancies to 10 but they threatened to force members into a redundancy if necessary.

The Branch Secretary, Bob Carnegie, and I met with Linx management to highly recommend them to ask for voluntary redundancies only and not to try and compel or force any members into redundant situation. It was made very clear to the company that if they wanted to pursue forced redundancies the Queensland Branch will fight it with everything we have to ensure no member was forced out of their job.

The company called for voluntary redundancies and received six expressions of interest from members who wanted to take the money and leave.

The six voluntary redundancies were accepted, and those members happily went on their way. The irony of the situation is that the very next day after these members left, the company found themselves short of labour and had to fly six members up from Newcastle to complete a job.

The Brisbane Linx EBA negotiations has progressed a long way since then and we are now in a situation where

Part A (National Agreement) is completed and in a final draft stage. Brett Membrey has been doing a great job as the Queensland representative in the national negotiations. Brett is also the driving force behind trying to get the backpay of Long Service Leave entitlements for casuals paid.

I believe the Part B (Local Agreement) will be in a final draft and ready for the members to review and vote on within weeks. Thanks to the great work of the delegates and committee, all members will remain as PGE's and keep their leave entitlements intact.

Five casual members will be upgraded to GWE's and we are seeking pay increases of 2%, 2.5%, 2.5%, 2.5%. (The first year 2% is already being honoured with all members now covered by Protect Personal Income Insurance).

I'd like to give special thanks to David Thorn and Peter Franchina who have both done a lot of extra work in their own time that will benefit all members and help to ensure all members get everything they are entitled too.

In Unity - Paul Petersen, Queensland Branch Organiser M: 0404 453869

Oaky Creek Mine

THE GLENCORE BATTLE at Oaky North continues. The Branch is putting a car load of activists together to go up and express our solidarity with these staunch unionists. Any members interested please contact Paul Petersen ASAP on 0404 453 936. ***Bob Carnegie***

Meeting Room Redesign

CONGRATULATIONS TO PAUL PETERSEN for a job well done in the redesign of our meeting room. The meeting room reflects what we are trying to achieve in the Branch. The banners are attached to the walls in such a way they can be taken down easily and used in demonstrations.

Over the Christmas, New Year period, I had a meeting for the socialist and trade union movement in the meeting room and they were hugely impressed. I entirely hope members are similarly impressed.

New Staff Member

THE QUEENSLAND BRANCH would like to welcome Jeff Rickertt. Jeff will be mainly working in membership and brings a wealth of experience to the Branch. Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Jeff.

Outsourcing Corners World's Labour Market

The world changes and quickly. I'm a man in the latter part of his 6th decade on planet earth. When I was a young man, just entering the workforce, virtually all jobs were permanent ones. In four decades the world has changed dramatically, casualisation and insecure work has become a feature of our lives with all the insecurities and problems that brings with it is one area our Branch and hopefully the entire union movement will be tackling in the year ahead. Bob Carnegie

THE LIST OF the world's largest employers was once dominated by household names like Ford, JC Penney and General Electric: companies that made and sold things.

New analysis conducted for *The Wall Street Journal* shows those names are nowhere to be found on that list today.

In their place are large outsourcing companies like Compass Group, Accenture and other businesses that essentially lease workers to clients.

Of the top 20 global employers in 2017, five are outsourcing and "workforce solutions" companies, analysis by S&P Global Market Intelligence shows. In 2000, only one employer in the top 20 – IBM, which outsources IT services among its many businesses – fell into that bucket. Outsourcing companies are vacuuming up the world's workers as traditional employers are handing over more of their tasks to non-employees, a shift that has transformed the way corporations do business and had profound effects on workers' prospects and pay.

The past two decades had been boom times for the outsourcing sector, with the annual value of contracts growing to $US37 billion in 2016 from $US12.5 billion in 2000, research and advisory firm Information Services Group said. The market is expected to rise again in 2018, thanks partly to double-digit growth in big technology projects as more companies transfer massive volumes of data to the cloud.

For employers, dispatching work to outside companies saves money and lets them access skills they need without adding to their headcount. Workers in jobs that have gone to outsourcers, though, can feel moved around like chess pieces, either displaced entirely or rebadged as employees of a service provider, sometimes with fewer benefits and lower pay. A growing body of economic research suggests outsourcing is a significant factor fuelling the rise of income inequality.

"If all the engineers are in one firm and the cleaners are in another, you get less diversity within firms and more inequality across firms," says Nicholas Bloom, a Stanford University economist.

Companies say unloading tasks to outside firms allows employees to do more high-value jobs. Providers like Accenture tell companies they can do their work better and more cheaply, prodding executives to view labour as an on-demand resource they can rent as needed.

"When CEOs tell me they want to keep all of their talent, my response is 'Why?', "says longtime Kelly Services boss Carl Camden, who retired earlier this year. "'If they're not our people, how can they be our people?' is a tautology you have to work them through."

The breadth of services on offer from outsourcing firms is staggering. Compass Group was founded in 1941 to run factory cafeterias in wartime England, eventually branching out into corporate catering. It now employs more than 550,000 and counts among its subsidiaries firms like Eurest Services, which staffs and manages mailrooms for clients, provides them with full-time receptionists, sets up their conference rooms for meetings and operates their warehouses. Eurest's clients include Google, SAP and Pfizer.

With so much work done outside the company, businesses employ fewer kinds of workers than the used to, a change that economists say has fuelled income inequality.

Outsourcing leads to workers being clustered in companies according to their skills, which affects pay and benefits. A bank used to employ janitors and security guards, in addition to traders and salespeople. For the sake of morale and fairness, management limited disparities in employees' compensation. That had the effect of boosting the pay of lower-skilled staff.

Outsourcing workforces, though, might shrink as algorithms take on more tasks, said Steve Hall, a partner at ISG.

By Lauren Weber The Australian 2 January 2018

'I Hope I Can Quit Working in a Few Years': A Preview of the U.S. Without Pensions

By Peter Whoriskey ***https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/i-hope-i-can-quit-working-in-a-few-years-a-preview-of-the-us-without-pensions/2017/12/22/5cc9fdf6-cf09-11e7-81bc-c55a220c8cbe_story.html?utm_term=.5845d24cc52f***

The attack on working people is many sided. I hope members take the time to read this. Bob

TULSA — TOM COOMER has retired twice: once when he was 65, and then several years ago. Each time he realized that with just a Social Security check, "You can hardly make it these days."

So here he is at 79, working full-time at Walmart. During each eight-hour shift, he stands at the store entrance greeting customers, telling a joke and fetching a "buggy." Or he is stationed at the exit, checking receipts and the shoppers that trip the theft alarm.

Tom Coomer, 79, outside of the Walmart where he works five days a week in Wagoner, Okla, on Nov. 16. Coomer used to work at the McDonnell Douglas plant in Tulsa before it closed in 1994. He and many of his co-workers could never replace their lost pension benefits and face financial struggles in their old age. (Nick Oxford for The Washington Post)

"As long as I sit down for about 10 minutes every hour or two, I'm fine," he said during a break. Diagnosed with spinal stenosis in his back, he recently forwarded a doctor's note to managers. "They got me a stool."

The way major U.S. companies provide for retiring workers has been shifting for about three decades, with more dropping traditional pensions every year. The first full generation of workers to retire since this turn offers a sobering preview of a labor force more and more dependent on their own savings for retirement.

Years ago, Coomer and his co-workers at the Tulsa plant of McDonnell Douglas, the famed airplane maker, were enrolled in the company pension, but in 1994, with an eye toward cutting retirement costs, the company closed the plant. Now, *The Washington Post* found in a review of those 998 workers, that even though most of them found new jobs, they could never replace their lost pension benefits and many are facing financial struggles in their old age: 1 in 7 has in their retirement years filed for bankruptcy, faced liens for delinquent bills, or both, according to public records.

Those affected are buried by debts incurred for credit cards, used cars, health care and sometimes, the college educations of their children.

Some have lost their homes.

And for many of them, even as they reach beyond 70, real retirement is elusive. Although they worked for decades at McDonnell Douglas, many of the septuagenarians are still working, some full-time.

Lavern Combs, 73, works the midnight shift loading trucks for a company that delivers for Amazon. Ruby Oakley, 74, is a crossing guard. Charles Glover, 70, is a cashier at Dollar General. Willie Sells, 74, is a barber. Leon Ray, 76, buys and sells junk.

"I planned to retire years ago," Sells says from behind his barber's chair, where he works five days a week. He once had a job in quality control at the aircraft maker and was employed there 29 years. "I thought McDonnell Douglas was a blue-chip company — that's what I used to tell people. 'They're a hip company and they're not going to close.' But then they left town — and here I am still working. Thank God I had a couple of clippers."

Likewise, Oakley, a crossing guard at an elementary school, said she took the job to supplement her Social Security.

Charles Glover, 70, on Nov. 16 at the Dollar General in Catoosa, Okla. He works several shifts a week as a clerk. (Nick Oxford for The Washington Post)

"It pays some chump change — $7 an hour," Oakley said. She has told local officials they should pay better. "I use it for gas money. I like the people. But we have to get out there in the traffic, and the people at the city think they're doing the senior citizens a favor by letting them work like this."

Glover works the cash register and stocks goods at a Dollar General store outside Tulsa to make ends meet. After working 27 years at McDonnell Douglas, Glover found work at a Whirlpool factory, and then at another place that makes robots for inspecting welding, and also picked up some jobs doing computer-aided design.

"I hope I can quit working in a few years, but the way it looks right now, I can't see being able to," Glover said recently between customers. "I had to refinance my home after McDonnell Douglas closed. I still owe about 12 years of mortgage payments."

For some, financial shortfalls have grown acute enough that they have precipitated liens for delinquent bills or led people to file for bankruptcy. None were inclined to talk about their debts.

"It's a struggle, just say that," said one woman, 72, who filed for bankruptcy in 2013. "You just try to get by."

A Perk That Became Too Costly

The notion of pensions — and the idea that companies should set aside money for retirees — didn't last long. They really caught on in the mid-20th century, but today, except among government employers, the traditional pension seems destined to be an artifact of U.S. labor history.

The first ones offered by a private company were those handed out by American Express, back when it was a stagecoach delivery service. That was in 1875. The idea didn't exactly spread like wildfire, but under union pressure in the middle of the last century, many companies adopted a plan. By the 1980s, the trend had profoundly reshaped retirement for Americans, with a large majority of full-time workers at medium and large companies getting traditional pension coverage, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Then corporate America changed: Union membership waned. Executive boards, under pressure from financial raiders, focused more intently on maximizing stock prices. And Americans lived longer, making a pension much more expensive to provide.

In 1950, a 65-year-old man could be expected to reach age 78, on average. Today, that 65-year-old is expected to live beyond 84. The extended life expectancy means pension plans must pay out substantially longer than they once did.

Ray walks through a collection of junk that he recycles at his home in Claremore. (Nick Oxford for The Washington Post)

Exactly what led corporate America away from pensions is a matter of debate among scholars, but there is little question that they seem destined for extinction, at least in the private sector.

Even as late as the early 1990s, about 60 percent of full-time workers at medium and large companies had pension coverage, according to the government figures. But today, only about 24 percent of workers at midsize and large companies have pension coverage, according to the data, and that number is expected to continue to fall as older workers exit the workforce.

In place of pensions, companies and investment advisers urge employees to open retirement accounts. The basic idea is workers will manage their own retirement funds, sometimes with a little help from their employers, sometimes not. Once they reach retirement age, those accounts are supposed to supplement whatever Social Security might pay. (Today, Social Security provides only enough for a bare-bones budget, about $14,000 a year on average.)

The trouble with expecting workers to save on their own is that almost half of U.S. families have no such retirement account, according the Federal Reserve's 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances.

Of those who do have retirement accounts, moreover, their savings are far too scant to support a typical retirement. The median account, among workers at the median income level, is about $25,000.

"The U.S. retirement system, and the workers and retirees it was designed to help, face major challenges," according to an October report by the Government Accountability Office. "Traditional pensions have become much less common, and individuals are increasingly responsible for planning and managing their own retirement savings accounts."

The GAO further warned that "many households are ill-equipped for this task and have little or no retirement savings."

The GAO recommended that Congress consider creating an independent commission to study the U.S. retirement system.

"If no action is taken, a retirement crisis could be looming," it said.

'We were stunned'

Employees at McDonnell Douglas in the early '90s enjoyed one of the more generous types of pensions, those known as "30 and out." Employees with 30 years on the job could retire with a full pension once they reached age 55.

But, as the employees would later learn, the generosity of those pensions made them, in lean times, an appealing target for cost-cutters.

Those lean times for McDonnell Douglas began in earnest in the early '90s. Some plants closed. But for the remaining employees, including those at the Tulsa plant, executives said, there was hope: If Congress allowed the multibillion-dollar sale of 72 F-15s to Saudi Arabia, the new business would rescue the company. In fact, the company said in its 1991 annual report, it would save 7,000 jobs.

To help win approval for the sale, Tulsa employees wrote letters to politicians. They held a rally with local politicians and the governor of Oklahoma. Eventually, in September 1992, President George H.W. Bush approved the sale. It seemed the Tulsa plant had weathered the storm.

The headline in the Oklahoman, one of the state's largest newspapers, proclaimed: "F-15 Sale to Saudi Arabia Saves Jobs of Tulsa Workers."

But it hadn't. Within months, executives at the company again turned to cost-cutting. They considered closing a plant in Florida, another in Mesa, Ariz., or the Tulsa facility. Tulsa, it was noted, had the oldest hourly employees — the average employee was 51 and had worked there for about 20 years. Many were close to getting a full pension, and that meant closing it would yield bigger savings in retirement costs.

"One day in December '93 they came on the loudspeaker and said, 'Attention, employees,' Coomer recalled. "We were going to close. We were stunned. Just ran around like a bunch of chickens."

A few years later, McDonnell Douglas, which continued to struggle, merged with Boeing. But the employees had taken their case to court, and in 2001, a federal judge agreed McDonnell Douglas had illegally considered the pensions in its decision to close the plant. The employees' case, presented by attorneys Joe Farris and Mike Mulder, showed the company had tracked pension savings in its plant closure decisions.

The judge found McDonnell Douglas, moreover, had offered misleading testimony in its defense of the plant closing. The judge, Sven Erik Holmes, blasted the company for a "corporate culture of mendacity."

Employees eventually won settlements — about $30,000 was typical. It helped carry people over to find new jobs. But the amount was limited to cover the benefits of three years of employment — and it was far less than the loss in pension and retiree health benefits. Because their pension benefits accrued most quickly near retirement age, the pensions they receive are only a small fraction of what they would have had they worked until full eligibility.

"People went to work at these places thinking they'll work there their whole lives," Farris said, noting that the pensions held great appeal to the staff. "Their trust and loyalty, though, was not reciprocated."

Dreaming of Work

The economic effects were, of course, immediate. The workers, most of them over 50, had to find jobs. Some enrolled in classes for new skills, but then struggled to find jobs in their new fields. They wondered, amid rejections, whether younger workers were favored.

Several found jobs at other industrial plants. One started a chicken farm for Tyson. Another took a job on a ranch breaking horses. The Post acquired a list of the 998 employees, reviewed public records for them and interviewed more than 25.

Of those interviewed, all found work of one kind or another. Yet all but a handful said their new wages were only about half of what they had been making. Typically, their pay dropped in half, from about $20 per hour to $10 per hour.

The pay cut was tough, and it made saving for retirement close to impossible. In fact, it has made retirement itself near impossible for some — they must work to pay the bills.

A few said, though, they work because they detest idleness, and persist in jobs that would seem to require remarkable endurance.

Combs, for example, works the graveyard shift, beginning each workday at 1:30 a.m. His days off are Thursday and Sunday. He worked 25 years at McDonnell Douglas, and more than 20 loading trucks.

He shrugs off the difficulty.

"I don't want to sit around and play checkers and get fat," Combs says. "I used to pick cotton in 90-degree heat. This is easy."

Coomer, too, even if he would have preferred to retire, seems to genuinely enjoy his work. At Walmart, his natural cheerfulness is put to good use.

"Hi, Tom, how *are* you?" a customer on a motorized scooter, one of many who greet him by name, asks on her way out.

"Doing good . . . beautiful day," he says, smiling warmly. Later he explains his geniality.

"I like to talk to people. I like to visit with them. I can talk to anyone. I've always been like that, since I was a kid." When he sees someone looking glum, he tells them a joke.

Why does Santa Claus have three gardens?
So he can hoe, hoe, hoe.

"People really like that one," he says.

Coomer grew up on a farm in Broken Arrow, got married when he was 17 — his wife was 15 — and says he's always liked work.

"I really loved working at McDonnell Douglas," he says. One time, he says, he worked 36 days straight: 11 hours on the weekdays and eight hours on Saturdays and Sundays. He joked the factory was his home address. All along, for his 29 years there, he had his eye on the pension. And then, for the most part, it was gone.

After the plant closed, Coomer worked as a security guard. Then he worked for a friend who had a pest-control company. When that slowed down, he picked up seasonal work at the city, doing some mowing and chipping.

Then came Walmart.

Soon, he said, he expects to cut back from full-time to about three days a week.

Along with his Walmart check, he gets $300 a month from the McDonnell Douglas pension. Had he been able to continue working at McDonnell Douglas, he calculates that he would have gotten about five times that amount.

"After they shut the plant down, I would dream that I was back at McDonnell Douglas and going to get my pension," Coomer recalled. "In the dream, I would try to clock in but I couldn't find my time card. And then I'd wake up."

In the dream, he would have retired years ago.

Greece Sold the Thessaloniki Port For 1.1 bln EUR

From:http://www.novinite.com/articles/186513/Greece+Sold+the+Thessaloniki+Port+For+1.1+bln+EUR

AN AGREEMENT FOR the sale of 67 pct of the **Thessaloniki port** to South Europe Gateway **Thessaloniki** (SEGT) Limited, was signed at the offices of the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF) on Thursday, following the approval of the Greek Court of Audit./***greece.greekreporter.com***

The SEGT consortium, consists of the preferred bidder Deutsche Invest Equity Partners GmbH, Belterra Investments Ltd. and Terminal Link SAS, and the sale totaled 231,926,000 euros.

The approval of the agreement by the Competition Commission, is pending. The agreement will need to be ratified in Parliament, and the transaction is expected to be concluded in the first quarter of 2018.

The agreement does not include the sale of **port** infrastructure, which has been leased to the **Thessaloniki Port** Authority via a concession until 2051.

The investment, based on existing information, is estimated to reach 1.1 billion euros in total. The agreement requires the investor to pay a price of 231,926,000 euros upon signing the contract and carry out mandatory investments of 180 million euros in the next seven years.

The revenue for the state from the concession contract (3.5 pct of the **port** authority's turnover), is expected to exceed 170 million euros.

Also included in the calculations, are forecast dividend payments to HRADF for the remaining 7.22 pct share, and additional investments until the contract's end in 2051.

The sale agreement was signed by HRADF Board Chairman Aris Xenofos and Sotiris Theofanis, representing the consortium Deutsche Invest Equity Partners GmbH, Belterran Investments Limited and Terminal Link SAS, and Boris Wenzel, CEO of Terminal Link SAS.

Following the signing, Xenofos said that "the development of the **Port** of **Thessaloniki**, which follows that of Piraeus, creates a growth axis that traverses vertically all of Greece, and further enhances its role as a European entry gate for multinationals in trade and cruise ship tourism."

The signing was also attended by French Ambassador to Greece Christophe Chantepy, Dr. Martin Schurig representing the German Embassy, Shipping and Island Policy Minister Panagiotis Kouroublis, and Shipping Deputy Minister Nektarios Santorinios.

Poets Corner *by cMc*

A man is lying on a city bench,
splayed out, long limbs hanging downward
thick jointed, big and powerful but hopeless now,
He is disheveled and
Freshly christened into skid row miseries.
He takes long flamboyant hits from ragged hand rolled cigarette
And exhales a poisoned cloud of rolling blue smoke
'I don't want to die ' he says and lurches up
'I don't want to die ' he hurls it out to hang in the passing throng of sharp dressed city folk. 'I don't want to die, I don't want die, I don't want to die'
He holds his face in his hands
Is still and quiet for a moment
Then lays back down,
Forearm cast across his brow, hand limp at the wrist with cigarette still smoldering, squashed between fingers,
'I don't want to die ' muttering soft now, 'I don't want to die'
' but don't anybody worry about it '.

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