



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. 115 - 25 January 2018

**Branch Monthly Meeting - Brisbane Ferries EBA - Vale Raymond Miers "Chicko" - ALP Win in By-Election
Women's March - Bob's Annual Leave Update - Book Corner - Decline in Trade Union Membership Article**

Get to the Branch Monthly Meeting Tuesday!

ALL MEMBERS ARE encouraged to attend Tuesday's monthly meeting to discuss and debate the pressures being placed on maritime workers and the working class generally.

The Branch will be joined by National Deputy Secretary, Will Tracey. Topics to include:

1. VICT (the first fully automated terminal in Australia) dispute in Melbourne which every wharfie in the State and around the country should understand
2. Offshore update
3. Upcoming events and campaigns including an unemployed seafarers discussion
4. Towage disputes and updates on Bowen and Brisbane
5. Amalgamation

We need you all here in force as we get out of the holiday mode into campaign activist mode to fight the fights we MUST have.

Get there, get informed and engage in the debate. In unity, Jason Miners, Acting Branch Secretary
Resist to Exist

Brisbane Ferries EBA

BRISBANE FERRIES EBA begins with the help of Gladstone tug delegate, Phil Hansen.

The EBA for Brisbane Ferries members is in its initial stages with a comprehensive Log of Claims being pursued by the union and supported by the delegates.



The EBA will be significantly more difficult than previous due to the increased staff and decreased union density but

rest assured we have developed a position worth fighting for should our members want to take Transdev to task.

All members are encouraged to monitor our Brisbane ferry member's EBA campaign as this workforce will need our support going into the pointy end of this critical EBA for our new members to the MUA Queensland Branch.

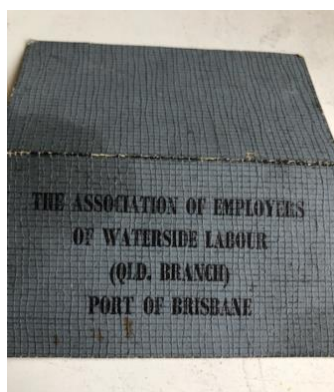
Phil Hansen is a relief Official whilst Bob is overseas and as your Acting Branch Secretary I am happy to report Phil has hit the ground running and is doing a terrific job.
Jason Miners

Vale Raymond Miers, also known as the Chicken Man, "Chicko" or 3130

D.O.B - 01/09/1943

RAYMOND MIERS PEACEFULLY passed away on the morning of the 03/01/18 age 74 with his wonderful family by his side. Ray has left behind his beautiful wife, 4 kids and gang of grand children

Ray started out in the great Waterside Workers Federation Brisbane Branch. In his 29 years as a wharfie, Ray in the infamous and well known gang #50 battled through many trade union disputes not only for Brisbane but for many unionists around the world.. After the "chicken man's" retirement he still remained a friend of the MUA and in contact with many of the past members.



Joined WWF 1964

Retired 1993

#3130

Gang # 50

Rest in Peace Comrade - Miers Family

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

73 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill QLD 4170

ALP Win in Morningside By-Election

MUA MEMBERS RECENTLY turned out in support of the ALP's candidate in the Brisbane City Council Morningside by-Election, Kara Cook.

Kara was elected as Councillor at the election on 20 January 2018 and takes the place of Cr Shayne Sutton who retired in 2017.



The Branch wishes to thank Cr Sutton for her support and tireless efforts in support of our members of the years, particularly our Brisbane Ferries members.

The Branch wishes Cr Cook all the best and looks forward to working with her and the broader ALP to continue to address issues which are of great importance to our members. Thank you to all the members who came out in support of this campaign.



Women's March – Brisbane

Tens of thousands of women marched peacefully all over the globe in order to raise their voices peacefully for gender equality, speaking out against hatred and bigotry, and volunteering in our communities. We do so in solidarity with our sisters all over the world. Ann Gray represented the Queensland Branch proudly.



MUA Qld Branch Member at the Women's Day March in Brisbane

Bob's Annual Leave Update

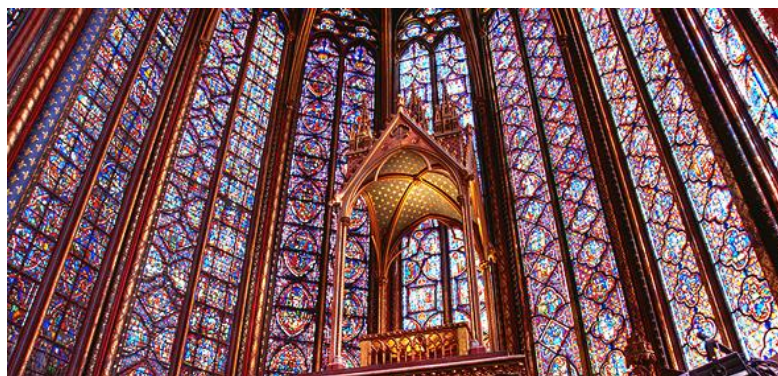
THIS YEAR MELISSA and I decided to take in three of the largest Mediterranean Islands and also see a little of Paris and mainland Italy as part of our annual leave. The

following are a few words and pictures some fellow workers might find of interest. I have included the price of some things so those interested may know prices.

We landed in Paris on the afternoon of the 14th January. We caught a train from Charles de Gaulle Airport (10 euros single \$15 AUD) to our hotel which was situated on the left bank in the 6th arrondissement (an arrondissement is a district) not far from Notre Dame Cathedral. As soon as we put down our bags we were off seeing the sights. This is the third time I have visited Paris as a tourist and I really find this great city hugely interesting from a personal, political, cultural and historical point of view.

We were only in Paris for three days and there was only limited time, so I'll just mention a few places. For me the highlight this time around was visiting the chapel of St Chappell which has perhaps the most stunning array of stained glass on earth.

The stained glass is, in various stages, 500 to 700 years old and even on the dull, wet and windy day, we visited it was breathtaking. On a clear summers day with the sunlight streaming in one might think the heavens had indeed opened. This church also held, supposedly, the crown of thorns Jesus Christ wore.



I visited the Conciergerie, originally a royal palace, which ended up being the place where many prisoners were held before their execution by guillotine during the French Revolution. It is also the largest medieval hall still in existence. It is a place where you wonder what the walls would say if they could talk.

Marie Antoinette spent her last days here as did Robespierre, and many others. The museum is really well laid out and hugely interesting. It gives one time to ponder about the importance of the French Revolution but also the huge problems of almost uncontrolled bloodletting at a certain stage of the revolution, known as the great terror and what that bloodletting cost the French People. It certainly cost them their first republic.

The other major museum visited was the museum dedicated to Pablo Picasso. Picasso is probably the most important artist of the 20th century, his long and prolific life covered much of last century. This museum contains some truly great works in all spheres of his prodigious talent.

Picasso was a man of the left and stood up against injustice and fascism as it was engulfing Europe. Picasso could have stood aloof from it all and just let his talent speak however he knew art could not exist in a vacuum and that in life one must stand for something. Picasso, to his great credit, could not look away whilst others suffered.



The last part I would like to mention was a visit to Cafe de Flore. This was the cafe that was made famous by being the meeting place of some great French thinkers, most notably Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre, both great public intellectuals who stood on the side of the oppressed of this world. The cafe even today is a meeting place for students and teachers and has a wonderful atmosphere. However, it is not a cheap place to have a hot chocolate and a croissant each as it came to 21 euros (\$32 AUD!)

My impressions of Paris this time around was that the economy seems to be on the rise since my last visit (I counted 36 tower cranes coming into Central Paris from the airport). The police presence is much more visible, which after several terror attacks is somewhat understandable. However, it remains a big city of great beauty, with all the problems of race and social problems that are a blight on it and sadly most other major cities around the world. However, the Parisians and the French generally are engaged in a battle against neo liberalism which in turn is inspirational.

For any reader of this piece who has not been to Paris, it's worth the effort, it's an expensive but wonderful place. Put it on your bucket list.

The Rime of the Globalised Mariner by Michael Bloor, 2012 and *The Rime of the Modern Mariner* by Nick Hayes, 2011.

Review – by Allan Gardiner



I AM SURE members would be interested to read Professor Michael Bloor's poem, published in the journal, *Sociology* (Vol. 47, no.1), but also available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1032.6943&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

The poem is a bad pastiche of Coleridge's great poem, *Rime of the ancient mariner* (1834). More importantly, it fails as an attempt to spread information to a mass readership about the plight of modern crews.

Coleridge's poem definitely did popularise the ideas of the Romantic Movement. Against the optimistic mood of early capitalism, his nightmarish images made readers feel "sadder but wiser" about the human condition.

Bloor's poem, by contrast, lacks the power of poetry. He merely puts his sociological research into rhyming lines. No wonder he adds a detailed exposé of the scams that have flourished since the 1980s: understaffing, convenience flagging, labour hire and unpoliced regulations. Bloor served on International Labour Organization's Joint Maritime Commission but, despite this, he puts his hope in consumer activism as the solution to these problems. Fat chance! Union struggle is needed to disrupt the logic of maximising profit.

The graphic novel, *Modern Mariner* by Nick Hayes, is a great artistic achievement in words and pictures. It is not about crewing issues but environmental destruction, especially the pollution of the oceans. Whereas Coleridge's ancient mariner suffers in hellish equatorial doldrums, Haye's modern mariner is stranded in the giant whirlpool of plastic in the North Pacific Gyre.

Disappointingly, though, this critique again puts the blame and the onus on 'ordinary people', as if we, rather than the owners of capital, make the decisions about the production of goods. Once again, too, the author should know better, since he also created the book *Woody Guthrie and the dustbowl ballads*.

Decline in Trade Union Membership Article Continued

A short tour of history will help us put the facts into perspective.

When Karl Marx, in the 1840s, declared that trade unions and "combinations of workers" were central to the self-liberation of the working class, he was not repeating

some generally-agreed truism, but arguing a case dismissed by the majority of the socialists of the time.

of manuals and utopias, combination has not yet ceased for an instant to go forward and grow with the development and growth of modern industry... If the first aim of resistance was merely the maintenance of wages, combinations, at first isolated, constitute themselves into groups as the capitalists in their turn unite for the purpose of repression, and in the face of always united capital, the maintenance of the association becomes more necessary to them than that of wages... In the struggle... this mass [of workers] becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself".

At the time there were scarcely trade unions anywhere except in Britain. And, there, in Britain, early efforts at mass trade-unionism like the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union of 1834 had collapsed quickly. The stable trade unions were, and until the late 1880s continued to be, fairly small societies of skilled workers - as much welfare agencies which helped their members find jobs, get help when unemployed or sick, or pay funeral expenses, as class-struggle bodies, and often narrow-minded and exclusionary towards "unskilled" workers. It took the insight of a thinker like Marx to see their future promise.

From the late 1880s to 1914, unions expanded seriously in Britain and in many other countries. Numbers were still small. Germany's labour movement, widely regarded as the world's best-organised, had only 2.5 million members in its main union confederation, in a population of 68 million, in 1914. Britain's trade unions were bigger, but still had only four million members, a density of 23%.

World War One brought a surge of union membership. Governments anxious to maximise war production with workforces reduced by military conscription were ready to allow or even help unions to expand, in return for wartime cooperation.

After the end of the war, as workers sickened by the slaughter and inspired by the example of the Russian Revolution rebelled, and governments and bosses came to think that trade-union concessions were for them a much lesser and more manageable evil than social revolution, unions grew further. The main German union confederation, for example, was up to eight million members by 1920. As immediate post-war ferment subsided, unemployment grew, and bosses regained confidence, unions were pushed back. Engineering bosses in Britain staged a two-month lock-out in March-June 1922. The German union confederation was down to 2.5 million members by 1932, and then was outlawed altogether in 1933, as Italian unions had been outlawed in 1924-6.

Elsewhere, in France and especially in the USA, where unions had previously been weak, union membership grew in the 1930s, but through hectic struggles, not through gradual processes of organic growth.

In World War Two, unions had already been banned in the Axis countries. Real trade unions had already been suppressed by Stalin in the USSR.

In Britain, the USA, though, the same process happened as in World War One: governments anxious to get war production, and unable to rely on the forces of capitalist market competition to promote discipline and productivity, allowed or helped trade-union membership to rise steeply.

As the war ended, the bosses' thought was, as an influential British Tory put it: "If you do not give the people social reform, they will give you social revolution". Trade unions were allowed, even encouraged, to organise in the countries of previously Nazi-occupied Europe and in Japan, where they had been crushed. In France, for example, unions gained numerous legal guarantees of recognition and places for their officials in the state social security and pension systems.

There was a backlash similar to that in the 1920s. In the USA, the anti-union Taft-Hartley law was passed in 1947; in the same year, the US occupiers helped the Japanese bosses beat down Japan's militant new unions. But, as capitalism entered a long period of fast and relatively smooth growth, the backlash was very much milder than in the 1920s.

The big capitalist corporations, enjoying stable profits and stable growth, considered the costs of dealing with unions - which of course sometimes included fighting harsh battles with them over particular wage-and-conditions demands - pretty much unavoidable, but entirely affordable. In France, even after a "soft" military coup in 1958 gave President De Gaulle the power to rewrite the constitution and substantially sideline parliament, unions were still able to grow with more-or-less favourable legal conditions.

The 1970s brought a new period of repeated, sometimes deep crises and of instability in profits. International capitalist competition, which had gradually increased over decades of falling trade barriers and falling freight costs, broke through to a much more intense level.

The first result was a surge of working-class struggles across the world, which often at first won sizeable victories and in many countries led to new rises in union density.

But the stakes had been raised. The period from 1945 to the early 1970s had never been one that could continue forever, but an exceptional one, in which capital in the richer countries could expand fairly smoothly within a system of US hegemony, gradual freeing of trade and expansion of trade relative to output, and the gradual rolling-out of new technologies initiated in the 1930s but then at first stifled by collapsed world trade and by world war (cars, plastics, white goods, TVs).

There was even more talk about automation and new industrial revolutions in the 1950s and 60s than there is now, but in fact there were fewer drastic disappearances

of old industries, emergences of new ones built on global supply chains, and top-to-bottom restructurings and re-sitings of continuing ones than there have been since the 1970s.

Capitalist leaders responded more nimbly, more adroitly, and more determinedly to the new conditions than union leaders did. The old relatively easy give-and-take was gone. Labour movements had two choices: to mobilise their accumulated strength to end capitalism and deploy the new technologies on lines of socialism and workers' control, or to muddle through with little perspective beyond damage-limitation. Since the combative rank-and-file battles of the 1970s had nowhere generated political forces strong enough to displace the old, uncombative leaders of the labour movements, they went for the second, and worse, choice. Trying to turn the clock back is no answer. The labour movement cannot force capitalist governments to return to walled-off economies and old technologies, any more than we can bring back the handloom-weaving workforce of early 19th-century Chartist days. And if we could, if we were strong enough, then we wouldn't want to: we would want a socialised economy, adapting technologies to social goals under democratic workers' control, over a territory covering many present-day states. Socialism cannot be built in one country.

Labour movements can win reforms in countries with high technology and open to the world market. The Scandinavian economies still have very high union densities and good welfare provision, and yet are considered by the high-capitalist World Economic Forum to be among the most "competitive" in the world, because they have high levels of technical expertise and good infrastructure. Brazil's union density was pushed up, and living standards for its poorest people were raised steeply, by reforms introduced by the Workers' Party government after 2002. Despite all the shortcomings of the Socialist Party administrations in Chile, they have introduced laws to increase trade-union rights, and union density has risen modestly.

Nor have economic changes produced sectors impossible to organise. By the 1970s the car industry was seen as a bastion of union strength in many countries. But in their first decades the car factories were seen as places "impossible to organise". Only after long and sometimes bloody battles did Ford in the USA recognise unions in 1941. In the USA, again, the chief activity of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in its heyday before 1914 was organising precarious, insecure, short-contract workers thought "impossible to organise".

Nurses are not "traditional" trade unionists. Their varying work rosters and the difficulties they have in organising industrial action so as not to harm patients are obstacles to organising. In Britain, nurses outside mental hospitals were not unionised until the 1970s. Yet the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation is now

Australia's largest union. National Nurses United is the fastest-growing union in the USA.

MUA Monthly Members Meeting

Tuesday 30th January

All branches



All members requested to attend

Hear an update on the work of your union
Get involved and have your say.

Date Saver – 20th Anniversary of the Patricks Dispute

ON FRIDAY 6 APRIL 2018 the Branch will be hosting a function for the 20th year anniversary of the Patricks Dispute.

The function will be held at the Union rooms. More details will follow.

Branch Officials Contact 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

