



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. 119 - 23 February 2018

Deputy Director WH&S to Address Branch Monthly Meeting – Hutchison Meeting – Importance of Delegates Union Seeks Pause after Seven-Month Lockout - Molière

Simon Blackwood, Deputy Director of Workplace Health and Safety to Address Branch Monthly Meeting

SIMON BLACKWOOD, DEPUTY Director of Workplace Health and Safety, Queensland, will be addressing our February Branch Monthly Meeting on Tuesday 27 February.

All members are urged to attend to listen and to ask questions of Simon on the latest developments in this important Government Department.

Hutchison Meeting

ON THURSDAY 15 February the delegates at Hutchison, Brisbane Container Terminal (BCT) organised to hold a members meeting at the MUA union rooms.

For the delegates at BCT this is not an uncommon thing to do. The delegates often organise off-site work meetings to discuss local and national issues that affect the workforce. These meetings are focused around airing grievances or differences of opinion from the members. The main focus is around how we can, as a collective, improve the working conditions at BCT.



The meetings are conducted by delegates/committee with everyone sitting in a circle as a collective and everyone is welcomed and encouraged to have some input. Some members who couldn't make it to the union rooms on the day joined into the meeting via phone hook-up. This year it's especially important to have a united workforce at BCT as we start negotiating the new EBA in May 2018.

Paul Petersen - Queensland MUA Organiser

The Importance of Delegates

By Bob Carnegie and Martin Thomas

THE QUEENSLAND BRANCH of the MUA is unequivocal in its support of on the job delegates. Several times over the last 2½ years our collective resolve has been tested and each time the Branch has fought back in defence of our most important asset – our rank and file delegates. In this and upcoming issues of the Branch News we will be running a series of interviews that were held with our rank and file delegates with Martin Thomas.

Joe Johnston

THE BIG ISSUE over the last year at the Hutchison terminal in Brisbane has been the roster - the fact that not even the permanents are on a regular roster. Being a permanent means that you're guaranteed a wage, but nothing about your shifts. We get only one day's notice of our shifts.

In fact we're sometimes being paid for more hours than we're working, and sometimes ships arrive on Sunday and the management leaves them for several hours before starting to work them. It looks like they're trying to get all the work done on day shifts and evening shifts, but it's hard to see how what they're doing makes sense even from their point of view.

The company says that the rosters can't be regular because the work is all dependent on shipping. But in fact they know which ships are due when, and before the 2015 dispute the Phase 2 workers had a regular roster.

Brisbane maintenance workers are on regular rosters. Operations workers at Hutchison in Sydney are on a regular roster.

Training is a big issue, too. We had people waiting a long time for training, and then we had the company hiring and training a lot of casuals in a rush.

The company was saying we might get a new contract from September. Now they say they'll know in December. If we get that extra contract, that's enough to keep our workforce fully employed.

Though permanents would say that rosters are the big issue, casuals' first issue is that they want more work. They are getting only two or three shifts a fortnight. We want to get them more work, and we want to get them

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

73 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill QLD 4170

taken on as permanents.

There has been some talk about automating the straddle carriers. This could be a perfect yard for Hutchison to trial that automation, because it's relatively small and not as busy as others. But I don't see how it would work.

It feels like the management here are making it up as they go, rather than having any strategy.

As a union in the workplace, we've had our ups and downs, and not everyone gets along with everyone else all the time, but on the whole we're doing well. We've come a long way. We are keeping the workforce united.

We're doing better with communications between operations and maintenance. We all talk.

As a delegate, I try to make sure that everyone knows that their opinion is important. I try to make sure we take decisions as a group. The delegates have to be the voice of the floor.

At the last off-site meeting we had, there were 16 there. I had hoped for more. But it was good. Everyone had something to say, everyone got listened to.

Paul Williams

A BIG ISSUE for us over the last year has been access to the MUA branch officials. That's due to the size of our branch and the number of representatives we have.

On some issues we need information from the officials, for example on Income Protection that was to do with the changeover date to the new provider.

For the future - we're staring down the barrel of more automation. The management have talked about implementation of the ARCOS system for a while now to automate the truck grids. I haven't heard of any dates, but the loss of any work should be of great concern to all of us.

In Melbourne, fully automated cranes are already being used. In container terminals now, virtually everything except lashing and unlashings can be controlled remotely, so we could end up with all the work contracted out.

At the ICTSI terminal at Webb Dock in Melbourne, already they have all the lashing and unlashings done by labour-hire workers, and all the other jobs in the terminal under the AMOU, not the MUA.

Patricks in Brisbane has been used over the years as a testbed for automation. New technologies have the bugs fixed here, and are then rolled out elsewhere.

We lost our maintenance area to outside contractors in the wash-up of the 1998 dispute. To date we have maintained MUA coverage in this area, but ongoing change of contractors continues to make that difficult. Our workforce has an average age of 48, which would tend to indicate that in the next 10 to 15 years the majority of our workforce will be looking to retiring. That's well and good, and our superannuation will go a long way to making sure we will maintain a comfortable standard of living.

What we need to ensure, though, is that our casuals etc. can step up into these permanent jobs, and retirement does not become another excuse to casualise the

workforce.

The unions have been fighting a rearguard action on this. We have to learn from other experiences, rather than just fighting in our own corner.

I think when automation started in our terminal, we had a head-in-the-sand approach. We thought it wouldn't work. But it does work.

The lesson is to fight every single thing that come up. If you don't stand up to defend and improve your conditions, you're just going backwards.

As well as being a delegate at Patricks, I'm involved in training. On training, maybe it could be a bit more tailored, but I think the branch is heading in the right direction.

Delegate training is important so that delegates can go into meetings prepared and informed. NSS Townsville is a good example of that.

We need to make sure that we continue to identify areas of need, and structure the training accordingly. The time-honoured method of handing down our history by word of mouth needs to embrace technology, and needs to include relevance to our newer members, for they will be the driving forces in years to come.

Phil Hansen

I'M ON THE tugs in Gladstone, employed by Smit Lamnalco. We have 10 tugs and one spare hull which has the ETV contract. All 10 tugs do all the harbor towage and all the LNG towage in the Port of Gladstone. The MUA has 41 members (GPH/IRs). The total workforce is about 130. The rest are the management, the engineers, and the Masters. The engineers are in the AIMPE and the Masters in the AMOU.

Our big issue is casualisation. Currently we have 28 full-time MUA positions, and about 15 casuals, who have no guarantees of work.

A few years ago, we had 14 permanents, two part-time permanents, and one casual. The work has increased with the LNG boom. Gladstone is now the biggest LNG terminal towage tonnage port in the Southern Hemisphere, with the three separate gas companies on Curtis Island.

The whole town of Gladstone had a boom when the LNG plants were being built, and the population probably went up by 30,000 in that period. It's been dwindling since, but the tug work is still getting busier. The coal terminal WICET has one coal berth and is expected to expand to six, adding to the four already at Clinton coal facility. Gladstone is going in the future to become a fuelling port for the US navy. I don't think it will slow down for another 20 years now.

Education is an issue for the union. It is hard for our structure to educate members on the run about our great union and the history and tradition of the towage industry with the influx of new entrants that have started in such a short period of time.

Management and HR seem for some reason not liking to employ IRs. The past fourteen to sixteen employees on

the deck have not been IRs. This is something that is a direct attack at the union, and means the towage industry missing out on so much experience.

Tug partnerships are always on the radar and a scare to all MUA members, as partnership is 100% non union. There's always talk of that. The port of Gladstone tug contract is due to expire at the end of 2018.

The LNG tugs turned up a couple of years ago. They are considerably larger than harbor tugs, and there are multiple safety concerns, so they have been operated with an extra GPH/IR during all escort towage.

We work a 182 days clear of duty roster. But we have a number of casuals now working more than casuals have ever worked on the tugs. There is proof, through the amount of work the casuals are doing, that more permanents are needed in an expanding port.

We signed an EBA six months ago. It doesn't really reflect what we're doing on the LNG side of the escort and standby operations, as the LNG is still settling down and going through the last of the teething problems. An issue, for example, is the call order of the tugs. We signed the EBA a bit early to assist giving Gladstone port and community predictability for the upcoming towage license.

The big threat for the next year is this: if Labor doesn't get in federally, and if Labor loses the state government, then an LNP state government will privatise the port of Gladstone, and then there will be no MUA on the tugs. You can see in West Australia - Port Hedland, the Gorgon Project, etc. - what happens with an LNP state government.

And we want a Labor government which is a left government, not a centre government as it has been in the past.

The priority for our union is to remember that the rank and file are the heart of the union, and they have to be listened to for any new idea that comes through.

The union does a lot of good things, and you feel proud when you wear the MUA shirt. I'm ok with the merger, ITF and the International Dockworkers' Council and all that union does, in saying that all decisions made need to be at the betterment of the majority not the minority. That's fine. But I think we've forgotten a bit about how strong we can be when we all pull together.

I think we're stuck a bit in the 1980s. We need to be more politically defined. Education needs a greater emphasis. We seem to be treading water. What I can say is: we are still around now albeit not as powerful as we once were, and employers are having a go at breaking the union. When the tide turns we not forgot those who tried to break us!

The union's youth program is difficult. There's no-one employed by the union to be the youth coordinator, and so it's run by people who have full-time jobs scattered round regional ports.

The union needs more resources for campaigning, and for things like having an employed youth coordinator.

Resources are like a seed. If you water it the seed will grow, but more seeds we need.

Charlie Gray

THE FOUR VESSELS in the fleet I work for are the only ones in Australia which are Australian-flagged and Australian-crewed, and do only international trading. There are a few other which do triangular routes.

Our vessels - Storm Petrel, Snipe, Sanderling, and Sandpiper - are gas buggies, carrying LNG from the North-West Shelf, mostly to Japan. They are all owned by the North-West Shelf consortium - NWSSSC, made up of the following companies: BHP Billiton Petroleum (North West Shelf) Pty Ltd, BP Developments Australia Pty Ltd., Chevron Australia Pty Ltd., Japan Australia LNG (MIMI) Pty Ltd., Shell Development (Australia) Pty Ltd., and Woodside Energy Ltd.

Trident is the ships' managing agent and Shell runs the ships (Trident is part of Shell).

When the North West Shelf started, the consortium signed heads of agreement with the government and the Seamen's Union of Australia [which amalgamated into the MUA in 1993], the Marine Institute [AIMPE], and the Merchant Service Guild [AMOU]. It was agreed that the vessels would be Australian-flagged and Australian-manned.

The agreement still stands today, and is the only reason why we are still employed. In the meantime, they've discovered more gas in the field, and it's got another 20-odd years.

As part of the agreement, the unions made a Continuous Operation Agreement, for no stoppages, and the job has never been stopped by industrial disputes.

Under the agreement, any dispute goes to an arbitrator. There is capacity to appeal his decision to a panel of three appellate arbitrators. However, that has never been convened since 1989.

The rest of the Shell fleet are always having a go at us about the extra costs. It's a price difference of \$4 million a vessel a year. It sounds a lot, but it's a very small amount in the scale of the LNG business. Besides, the staffing scale on our vessels is half the others. We have 23 on each vessel, where others have thirty. But we make safety paramount.

Mainly we go to Japan on long-term contracts. The vessels used to run like a bus timetable, but it's more variable now because of LNG price variations and spot cargoes sometimes being given priority. Our swing length is six weeks, usually two trips, but it can be blown out to nine weeks.

Labour for the MUA grades used to be supplied by the MUA. Now it's company employment, but we're still 100% MUA. The other grades used to be 100% union too, but no longer. They recruit from the Royal Navy.

There are 12 MUA members on each vessel, so, since each vessel is double-crewed, 96 MUA members. The company wants to interchange members between vessels, and does that with other grades. I'd have no objection

myself, but we're still always on the same vessel with the same other 11 MUA members, except that they can put you on another vessel, or make you lose wages, if you're in the red on your leave allowances.

If someone is off sick or unavailable, they pick up labour from the MUA database of unemployed seafarers. Our big issue over the last year has been the EBA. It took the company over 18 months to sign the EBA, and they have just signed it.

Over the last four years Shell have put in new management, and there's been more friction. Now the company is refusing to pay the casuals back pay owed under the new EBA.

We have a 16-member Consultative Committee, with four members from each vessel, two from each shift. Our union affairs are dealt with by Paul Garrett, the Sydney Presiding Officer, and Ian Bray, assistant national secretary. We can contact the officials from meetings on our vessels, or through the different state branches across Australia which we're members of.

The issues in the EBA negotiations were wages, leave, and the company wanting to reduce manning. In the end, in the economic climate we've got, we did ok.

Over the years, we've lost one IR, one second cook, and one crew attendant, going down from 15 MUA members on a vessel to 12. Really there's not much technological change. All the vessels are over 20 years old, and they are going through longevity dry-docking, which will add another 15 years to their lives. They are over 100,000 tons and take over 120,000 cubic metres of LNG. We average 16-17 knots.

What's changed in the job over the years? The biggest change was when they did away with booze on the ships, five years ago. It didn't bother me, but it has changed the social aspect. There's a lot of movie-watching now in off-duty time. And browsing the internet, which can be good but also bad. We have satellite TV, but not many watch the news.

When I first went to sea in 1968, all you had was books and oral history. No TV, no internet. You read and listened. Your first book was *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, and you heard labour's story told by people who had been there. You had respect for elders, and the emphasis was always on integrity.

When I grew up in New Zealand, unionism was compulsory, and I was surprised the first time I met someone who was not in a union.


There was a unity of being at sea. Mind

you, when you got into port, everyone would go drinking and start bluing.

Today, especially since the boom in offshore, people go to sea for the money. I went to sea because I wanted to go to sea. First I went everywhere a Kiwi ship should go, which wasn't far. Then I decided to see the world from a seaman's view (warts and all). I sailed on Norwegian and Swedish ships. Then I came back to this coast, which had the best conditions in the world.

In this day and age, the employers recruit from ex-service people, or tradesmen from the shore with no labour movement or socialist background, and too many (not all, but too many) choose not to read. They get brainwashed by the idiot box. It's created a malaise within the industry.

What would I most like to see the union achieve over the next year? I would like to see more respect, and honesty among our membership and more participation of the rank and file in the union.



Brisbane Labour History Association
PO Box 5299 West End Q4101
ABN: 30 340 094 794

*Brisbane Branch of the Australian Society
for the Study of Labour History*

18 February 2018

Bob Carnegie
The Secretary
Queensland Branch
Maritime Union of Australia
73 Southgate Avenue
Cannon Hill QLD 4170

Dear Bob,

Re: 15th Biennial Labour History Conference

I am writing on behalf of the committee and other members of the Brisbane Labour History Association to express our thanks for the tremendous support that your organisation provided for the 15th Biennial Labour History Conference held in Brisbane in September last year. Your support helped make 2017 a very successful year for BLHA, and we look forward to future cooperation in 2018 and beyond.

The 2017 conference was a very successful one, thanks in large part to the support provided to our organisation by the trade union movement. The conference generally attracts academics and students from the field of labour history from around the country, but has not been hosted by Brisbane for some time. Many members of our parent federal organisation (Australian Society for the Study of Labour History) and other conference attendees expressed how impressed they were by the contributions made by current trade union officials. Several remarked that they had never been to a conference with such a high level of participation from current trade union officials and activists.

In particular, I would like to thank the MUA for its very generous sponsorship of our guest speaker, Ruth Milkman. Ruth's presentation, and her insights into the current challenges of the US labour movement, was indeed one of the highlights of the conference.

BLHA would like to formally express its gratitude for the generous support provided by the MUA, and its appreciation of the importance of promoting the study of labour history.

Yours sincerely,
C. H. Buckley
Craig Buckley
Secretary - Brisbane Labour History Association

Union Seeks Pause after Seven-Month Lockout

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THE CFMEU HAS applied for a three-month cooling off period at Glencore's Oaky North coal mine in Queensland, hoping it will act as a circuit breaker after a lockout exceeding 220 days.

The union's s425 application has been listed before Commissioner Paula Spencer in Brisbane on Thursday and Friday.

When considering such applications, the Commission has to take account of a range of factors including whether a cooling-off period would assist bargaining representatives to resolve the dispute and the duration of the protected industrial action.

Glencore applied last month to terminate the 2012 Oaky North enterprise agreement after workers overwhelmingly rejected a new enterprise deal, despite it being recommended by the Commission and the company and CFMEU negotiators reaching in-principle agreement (see Related Article).

The rejection of the offer led to Glencore extending the lockout and applying to terminate the 2012 agreement. A hearing of the company's termination application is now expected in late May or early June before FWC Deputy President Ingrid Asbury.

CFMEU mining and energy division Queensland district president Stephen Smyth said today the company had written to the union saying it wanted to continue bargaining, but had also issued disciplinary notices to some workers about their behaviour on the picket line.

"We need to get a circuit breaker in all this to at least attempt rebuild the relationship, get people back in the gate," Smyth told Workplace Express. "Glencore has clearly taken a scorched earth policy – they want everything." The company confirmed it will participate in this week's s425 hearing but declined to comment.

On February 10, Mackay's Daily Mercury newspaper reported that Federal Nationals MP George Christensen had called on Glencore to stop the rolling lockouts.

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

The newspaper said a delegation of eight Oaky North workers argued their case in Canberra, meeting Resources Minister Matt Canavan, Workplace Minister Craig Laundy and other local Federal Coalition MPs.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has confirmed it is investigating industrial action at Oaky North, but has said it will examine the actions of management as well as unions (see Related Article).

Notice about Application for Rule Changes – SUAQ

SUAQ MEMBERS (The Seamen's Union of Australasia, Queensland Branch Union of Employees) are notified that a meeting of members will be held to consider making an application to amend the SUAQ's Rules.

As a result of the upcoming amalgamation of the MUA with other federal unions to create The Maritime Union of Australia Division of the CFMMEU, the Rules of the SUAQ will have to be amended to ensure they remain consistent with the rules of the federal union. The proposed changes would create a second Assistant Secretary position (to match the second Queensland Branch Assistant Secretary position in the federal rules), would update references in the Rules that need to refer to the new name of the federal union, and make other similar technical changes arising from the amalgamation.

The meeting will be held at 09:00 AEST on Friday, 2 March 2018 at the MUA Branch office, 73 Southgate Ave, Cannon Hill.

Molière

Molière - I'm a fan of Molière who was a great French Playwright with a deep insight into the human condition, here is one of his quotes. *Bob Carnegie*

Without knowledge, life is no more than the shadow of death.

Unity Bank News



Unity
Bank
your bank at work



All existing members and any new members can now have their family join Unity Bank. As well as the usual suite of banking products we are able to offer a full range of insurances. We also offer travel needs such as foreign cash and travel cards. **For further details visit us or call our office (M-F 8.30-3.30) on 38994755 or 38994500 or simply check out our website www.unitybank.com.au** where you can find the complete range of products & services on offer.