



To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing - Raymond Williams No. 138 - 6 July 2018

**Branch Update - ILWU 37th Convention Report – Fundraise with Bushy Lang
New Maritime Super Financial Planner – Support for Gothenburg Dockers
Underpaid and Exhausted: The Human Cost of Your Kindle - Book Review – Cartoon Corner**

Branch Update by Bob Carnegie

Branch Assistant Secretary Election

The Branch wishes to congratulate all candidates in the recent election. The successful candidate was former Branch Organiser, Paul Petersen. The Branch wishes Paul all the best in his new position.

Reallocation of Duties

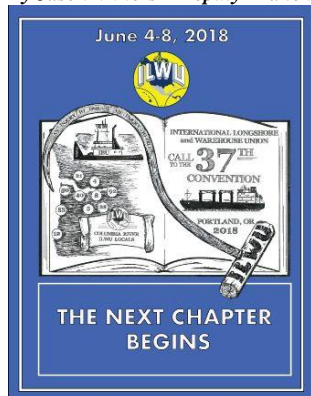
Due to the election, I am in the process of reallocating work to reflect the demands and importance of the year's work ahead. A complete list of all Officials work areas and responsibilities will be in next week's Branch News as well as emailed to all members.

Branch Financial Year Diaries

The Branch has produced a financial year diary for all members. They will be distributed on all job sites however members can contact the Branch and we will see one is posted out.

ILWU 37th Convention Report Back

By Jason Miners – Deputy Branch Secretary



The ILWU 37th convention in Portland, Oregon was proudly supported by the Queensland Branch with both myself and Bill Ross (DP World) attending on the Branch behalf.

The ILWU are family to the MUA and the convention was just a further extension of the great bond between us and, arguably in my opinion,

one of the best trade unions in the world.

There are several areas in which both unions have worked together over the years and it certainly is a lot easier to call upon support from our ILWU brothers when there is a face to a name and local or location of work, where support is required, that we know our brothers and sisters on a personal level.

The association with the MUA goes back some time but the pivotal point was the 98 dispute and the Columbus Canada dispute, which saw LA longshore

workers refuse to stevedore a ship loaded by scab labour in solidarity with locked out Patrick workers.

The ILWU covers around 60,000 dock workers on the US West Coast, Alaska and Hawaii and has a strong and historic relationship with the MUA. It was founded in the thirties by one time Australian seafarer and US longshore worker Harry Bridges, who jumped ship, fell in love and stayed in the USA to formulate one of the beacons of hope and template for the workers of the world in struggle.

The ILWU convention is the democratic process for determining ILWU Rank & File Policy for the next three years, similar to our own MUA National Conference. The ILWU members are in the process of electing a new president as the longstanding stalwart in Big Bob McEllrath is retiring as President which he has been since 2006.

I see Bob as a leader amongst leaders and believe that in terms of presence in a room of fellow workers who share our cause there is no bigger presence than Bob McEllrath.

Both Bill Ross and myself were overwhelmed with the warmth and hospitality in which our American comrades took care of us and plan on evolving the discussions with rank and file workers on how we can learn from each other to keep the waterfront as good as it is and to improve it collectively into the future. Particularly in the areas of maintenance and trades/trades technology which will be among the primary future jobs in a changing technological workplace. On the waterfront the future is automation and upskilling needs to be front and centre along with claiming every job possible under our coverage.

In unity Bill Ross – DP World, Jason Miners - Deputy Branch Secretary

Help Fundraise with Bushy Lang

Members,

A lot Wharfies and Seafarers will know Mark Bushy Lang. Mark's youngest daughter Grace, 23 years old was diagnosed with a brain tumour early last week.

Bushy is trying to rise some funds and awareness around this issue which affects a lot of young

Australians. There were 2,076 new cases of brain cancer and other CNS cancers diagnosed in Australia in 2017.

While many cancers almost exclusively present in older people, this is not the case with brain tumours, as more people under 40 are affected by brain tumours than any other cancer.

Perhaps of most concern is that brain tumours disproportionately affect children aged 1-14 years old in Australia than any other disease.

The prognosis for children with brain cancers, the most common being medulloblastoma, is much better than in adults though. Around 70% of these patients will have curable disease.

Bushy has organised a motorcycle and car drive as way to raise some funds and awareness. We will be meeting at the Nudgee Beach hotel at 0830 ready for a 0900am departure on Saturday 21st of July.

The ride/drive will head for the Dayboro hotel and then cruise over to the D'Aguilar hotel for lunch, and back to Nudgee Beach.

It will be 20 dollars per head donation and we'll organise some raffles on the day. Come along for a great day out and help support this wonderful family. *In unity - Paul Petersen*

Maritime Super Financial Planner

Maritime Super is pleased to announce the appointment of Financial Planner, David Zaloudek. David is a Financial Planner with eight years' experience in the finance industry and is committed to helping members make the most of their Super.



David is based out of the MUA office in Cannon Hill, Brisbane and will service members located to Queensland. To make an appointment with David, please call 0488 072 369 or email davidz@maritimesuper.com.au

Support with the Gothenburg Dockers

MAERSK IS THE largest Integrated Terminal Containership operator in the world. Their influence is enormous and sadly it even drifts into some unions. Maersk put up the concept of 'Social Dialogue' when in fact it is either the Maersk way or the highway. Maersk's conduct in the port of Gothenburg has been anti union in the extreme.

The Queensland Branch wants to make it very clear that we stand 100% with the Gothenburg Dockers. As the Branch Secretary of the Queensland Branch and a joint coordinator of the IDC in the Oceania region, I or any maritime worker with any grey matter between their ears are not interested in internal union matters in Sweden but we are interested and concerned about Dockers having their working lives torn apart by the Maersk Corporation.

We stand by the Dockers at Gothenburg and call on all international and national transport unions to do all in their power to support these brave men and women in the docks in Gothenburg.' *Bob Carnegie*



THE GOTHENBURG DISPUTE

¿What's going on in Sweden with SDU dockworkers?



MAIN FACTS

1. A hundred elected Health and Safety officers barred from performing their duties in the ports
2. Union Busting
3. Sacking Dockworkers and replacing them with non-union temp agency workers

Background

There are several factors in play at the present time, the actions of APM, the actions of the Swedish Employers organization and also the Swedish Government. This is against the background of the upcoming Swedish general election on 7th September and the announcement from the Government that it will present new legislation that will restrict the right to strike.

APM Terminals

APM has undertaken a campaign against the Swedish Dockworkers' Union (SDU) and has portrayed them to be the aggressor in the dispute; with the Port of Gothenburg/APM claiming that Swedish companies have lost between 600 and 1176 million Euro since the dispute began. However, the major contributor towards the alleged losses are APM themselves, who locked out the dockworkers. During the lockout, both APM/Maersk and customers redirected a large amount of cargo.

Over 100 dockworkers have lost their steady jobs on the container terminal, with some being re-hired as temp agency workers back in the port. These temp agency workers are more vulnerable to threats and pressure from their employer than casual dockworkers employed directly by the company.

Announced legal restrictions on the Right to Strike

In 2016, the Port of Gothenburg and APM approached the Government about the Right to Strike, especially that of the dockworkers, and sought to have this right limited. The Government began an official review with the task of recommending new legislation. Reacting to the threat of major changes and some unions' active support of increased suppression of strikes, the union confederations (the LO, TCO and Saco) announced on June 5th that they had struck a deal with the employers to precede the state review. The parties presented a joint proposal to limit the right to strike when there already is a CBA in the workplace. The Government welcomed the announcement and said it would work to turn the new restrictions into law as soon as possible. It is likely that APM has escalated the dispute in Gothenburg and initiated the lockout and then claiming huge financial loss, as means to influence the Government over the cost of strikes to the economy.

Swedish Employers Organization

APM has escalated this with the active cooperation of the Swedish Employers Organization who have since assisted in spreading the dispute to other ports, and they have taken the opportunity to implement restrictions on the Right to Strike. A consequence of the dispute spreading to the other Swedish ports is that all facility time, paid and unpaid, for SDU trade union officials has been withdrawn and the union has been barred from participating in local negotiations. This is making the day to day work of the union much more difficult. But the greatest impact is upon the work of the SDU health and safety officials.

Health and Safety

SDU Health and Safety officials are elected by the workers within the ports in democratic elections, but as the CBA in the ports is under control of the minority union Swedish Transport Workers Union, the employers have now been able to remove both facility time and the legal mandate of these officials. The impact of removing the SDU health and safety officers is very serious, as it often only leaves few and sometimes poorly trained STWU health and safety officials. Many of these do not have the trust or confidence of the dockworkers. In a number of ports, the STWU does not have any members, resulting in the fact that there are now no Health and Safety officers at all present in the workplaces. The result has been to see a major deterioration in health and safety activity, and a rise in dangerous incidents and accidents; this will only lead to the loss of life in the ports.

Underpaid and Exhausted: The Human Cost of Your Kindle

Sourced from: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/jun/09/human-cost-kindle-amazon-china-foxconn-jeff-bezos>

In the Chinese city of Hengyang, we find a fatigued, disposable workforce assembling gadgets for Amazon, owned by the world's richest man. by Gethin Chamberlain in Hengyang, China

Five o'clock in the morning and the young woman's eyelids are drooping. All night she has been removing spots of dust from Amazon smartspeakers with a toothbrush. Time seems to crawl. Now she is overwhelmed with exhaustion.

She works on, more and more slowly, until she can do no more. She looks around the workshop. Other workers have rested their heads on the bench. She slumps forward and falls asleep. Let's call the young woman Alexa. Alexa, what are you doing here?

For an answer, we must fast forward a couple of months to last Monday. It is an overcast morning in the city of Hengyang, in the southern Chinese province of Hunan. More than seven million people live in this city, the second-largest in the province. It is known locally as the Wild Goose City, for the birds that used to stop off on their southerly migration, but many people even within China would struggle to find it on a map.

The morning is warm but overcast, with a light haze that could be fog or pollution. The road to the Foxconn factory in Baishazhou Industrial Park is wide and lined with well-cared-for plants. There's a steady stream of cars, motorbikes and buses heading towards the factory, which sits back from the road behind a large gate. Blue-uniformed security staff keep watch on those coming in and the street outside.

Dozens of workers are arriving, casually dressed in jeans and T-shirts. Most are young and there is a good mixture of women and men. Ahead of them lies a 60-hour week, eight regular hours for five days, plus two more of overtime each day and another 10 on Saturday. They will be expected to hit tough targets and must ask permission to use the toilets. The overtime – up to 80 hours a month – is far in excess of the 36 hours stipulated in Chinese labour laws, but companies can and do seek exemptions and workers want the overtime, to boost their basic pay.

These are the people who are making the smart speakers and tablets that Amazon hopes to make a fixture in millions more homes around the world this year: the Echo and Echo Dot – which both spring to life when the user addresses them as Alexa – and the Kindles.

It is a year since Amazon sealed a deal with the giant Foxconn company to ramp up its hardware production in Hengyang, with the Chinese firm reportedly adding 30 new production lines and creating 15,000 jobs.

Foxconn is China's largest single private employer, and in March it reported a 4.2% increase in profits, with net income rising to £1.84bn in the last three quarters of 2017. Profits for the first quarter of this year were £605m

and its CEO, Terry Gou, has a fortune reported to be about £5.3bn. But it is said to be keen to diversify to reduce its reliance on Apple and it is investing heavily in the Hengyang plant to meet the demand from Amazon. The Foxconn factory in Hengyang relies on the tried and tested formula of low wages and long hours. But here there is another element: the extensive use of agency workers who don't have the security of a regular job.

These employees – known as dispatch workers in China – are hired in from labour companies as an off-the-shelf workforce. They are generally slightly better-paid than permanent members of staff, but they get no sick pay or holiday pay and can be laid off without any pay at all during quiet months when production drops off. In some ways they resemble the Amazon products they are making: wanted one day and discarded the next.



The Foxconn factory producing Amazon Echo smartspeakers and Kindles in Hengyang. Photograph: China Labor Watch

But the increasing reliance on a disposable workforce by companies has alarmed the Chinese government, and in 2014 it changed its labour laws to limit dispatch workers to just 10% of a company's staff – and then only to cover temporary work. Companies were expected to fill most positions with regular staff on employment contracts.

The wage slips pinned to the walls of the Foxconn factory in Hengyang suggest that the message may be taking some time to get through: they show that about 40% of the workforce in the Hengyang plant are bought in from agencies. These are the workers on whom Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos is relying to further entrench his position as the world's richest man.

Bezos is worth an estimated £102bn, a fortune he acquired against a backdrop of global reports of misery for Amazon's warehouse workers, exhausted by the demands made on them in return for the most basic of wages. Unions and labour rights groups have protested about low pay and harsh working conditions, and three delivery firms used by Amazon are facing a legal challenge from the GMB union, demanding that gig economy delivery drivers receive sick pay and holiday pay.

Last month it was revealed that ambulances had been called 600 times to Amazon's UK warehouses over the past three years. There have been repeated calls for Amazon to improve the lot of its workers.

But Bezos doesn't see the need. Collecting an award for "outstanding personalities who are particularly innovative, and who generate and change markets, influence culture and at the same time face up to their responsibility to society" a couple of months ago, he was questioned about the controversies surrounding the way he made his money.

"When you're criticised," he said, "first look in the mirror and decide: are your critics right? If they are right, change. Don't resist."

But Bezos's mirror apparently showed him that his critics were wrong. "I'm very proud of our working conditions and very proud of the wages we pay," he told the audience gathered to fete him.



Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has become the world's richest man. Photograph: Todd Williamson/Getty

And now he and Gou have brought that same formula to Hengyang. But what draws two of the world's richest men to set up in a city far from the big manufacturing hubs of Shenzhen, Shanghai, Tianjin and Guangzhou,

with their easy access to shipping and huge industrial bases?

For an answer, it helps to know that Alexa is working for 14.5 yuan an hour (£1.69). That's £1 less than the £2.69 national average for a factory worker in China. Foxconn could not pay her so little in Shenzhen, where the legal minimum wage is 19.5 yuan an hour, or in Shanghai, where it is 20 yuan.

Some days Alexa gets to work overtime. But when she opens her wage slip at the end of the month she will be disappointed, because she and her fellow dispatch workers are paid only the same 14.5 yuan rate that they get for the main shift, instead of the time-and-a-half stipulated by Chinese labour law and Amazon's own supplier code of conduct.

Foxconn promises agency workers a minimum of 3,700 yuan a month (£431.64), but pay slips and workers' own accounts suggest real wages rarely get close to that figure. Most earn between 2,000 and 3,000 yuan, with permanent staff earning between 2,000 and 2,500 yuan. In 2017, the average wage for a worker in Hengyang was 4,647 yuan a month.

Pay rates have rocketed in China in recent years, but Hunan remains one of the provinces with the lowest wages, and the minimum in Hengyang – 1,280 yuan a month – is barely half that in Shenzhen, where Foxconn's Apple factory is based.

That Shenzhen factory has been the subject of years of criticism for its treatment of staff manufacturing iPhones and other Apple devices – with 14 suicides in 2010 prompting the installation of netting around the factory dormitories to catch workers jumping from the roofs.

Now rewind again, back to March. It is early evening and Alexa is getting off the bus and entering the factory

for the night shift. She has secured a job as a dispatch worker through the Qizhong labour company – one of six supplying the factory – and has joined the production line making Amazon's mini smart speaker, the Echo Dot.

Alexa looks much like the other young women around her, but she has a secret. Alexa has been sent in undercover by the US-based labour rights investigator China Labor Watch to find out what is going on behind the security gate. It is the first time anyone has investigated Amazon's production lines, and CLW has teamed up with the Observer (and the Sunday Mirror) to publish the findings. Its own report – Amazon Profits from Secretly Oppressing its Supplier's Workers – is published online today.

Alexa is early, like all the other workers. They know that they must leave time to clear security and be at their workstations for the 8pm start, though they won't be paid for turning up early. She notices that the temperature inside the workshops is noticeably higher than outside and the anti-static gloves she has to wear quickly make her hands sweat.



Wage slips pinned to the walls in the Foxconn factory, Hengyang. Photograph: China Labor Watch

Every day when she returns to the company dormitory she shares with five other women, she jots down what she has seen in her diary: the monotonous work; the colleagues complaining about sore backs and the bright lights that make their eyes tired; the overwhelming sense of exhaustion. She notes that workers must ask permission from a supervisor to go to the toilet, and how some workers are left in tears when they are told off by their line manager.

Today Alexa has to clean 1,400 Echo Dot speakers with a toothbrush dipped in rubbing alcohol to remove any specks of dust. Four-and-a-half hours into the shift, she is already flagging.

"I was already so tired and my movements grew slower," she writes later. "I brushed with less and less force. There were 20 or 30 speakers building up in front of me that I had yet to brush clean.

"The speakers that remained to be cleaned kept building up in front of me. The line technician came over and told me to brush faster and that my movements were too slow ... but I no longer had any strength." Another day she chats to an older woman sitting opposite her.

“The woman across from me said that she had been brushing for so long that her hand was growing numb, her neck was sore, her back was sore, her eyes couldn’t see clearly, and her vision was getting worse ...”

Another worker tells her she, too, is suffering: “While working at the same work position and doing the same motions over and over again each day, she felt exhausted and her back was sore and her neck, back and arms could barely take it any more.”



The workers’ eating area in Hengyang’s Foxconn factory. Photograph: China Labor Watch

Alexa’s diary makes no happier reading the following day. A woman of about 45 tells her how she has been scolded because she is not fast enough: “It might be because she was getting older so her speed was slower and her reactions were slower. When the line leader was telling her off, she started crying. After I returned to the dorm, an older woman ... said that last time the line leader told her off, she also cried.”

She describes long nights of repetitive and relentless work, with fellow workers close to falling asleep on their feet. During a break about midnight she sees that “many people were resting on the assembly line and sleeping, while others had pushed together some chairs and were sleeping on those. Some had even stacked together some foam boards and slept on top of them.”

She finds little relief on returning to the dormitories, where she notes that there is no emergency escape plan in case of fire and “escape routes are unlabelled”. Workers complain about the living conditions, including leaks in the roof and lights in the showers not working.

Alexa’s diary records her own frustrations on the production line and how she is overwhelmed by tiredness: “In my mind, I was both furious and lamenting as my hands continued the repetitive motions. My hands started feeling sore, but I managed to make it to 3am.

“Around 4am, the workers across from me stopped working. I continued observing. The workers across from me told me I didn’t need to watch any more as the quota had already been reached. At this time, I saw that some of the people in the work positions behind us had also stopped and were sitting due to lack of work. I felt very tired so I rested my head on the assembly line. After a while, the line technician came over and tapped me and

said I couldn’t sleep on the assembly line, so I sat up again.”

At the end of the shift, Alexa leaves the workshop and goes to collect her phone from her locker: “There were a lot of people squatting or sitting on the kerbside, eating a boxed lunch or playing with their phones. They all looked exhausted.”

Talk in the factory is of agency workers being laid off without pay during quiet periods: 700 in April and May, and 2,700 in January and February. Yet among the workers there is no great simmering anger, no burning resentment. Few have heard of Amazon or Bezos. They aren’t expecting very much and aren’t particularly disappointed when not very much is exactly what Foxconn and Amazon give them.

One 32-year-old married man says he can earn a basic 2,000 yuan (£233) a month making Kindles, but even with overtime taking it up to around £315 it is not enough.

“Currently, the wages are very low. I hope to be able to earn around 3,000 to 5,000 yuan a month. Though I doubt I can earn this on a consistent basis.” At least it is better than being a dispatch worker, he says. “The factory just fires them.”

But a 19-year-old dispatch worker disagrees. He says he can earn 145 yuan a day if he works a couple of hours’ overtime and just accepts it when he is laid off: “The factory will schedule holidays for dispatch workers. Around half a month to a month. I just stay at home. It is OK.”

It’s really not OK though, says Li Qiang, CLW’s executive director. Last month he wrote to Bezos, setting out the investigation’s findings and challenging the hiring of more than 40% of the workforce from agencies.

“This violates Chinese labour law. Foxconn uses a large number of dispatch workers and violates workers’ interests via these dispatch companies. This practice is unethical and illegal,” he wrote.

“I hope that you can compel your suppliers to improve their working situations and to manufacture Amazon products under ethical conditions.”

But Amazon already knew this, because Alexa was not the only person running a ruler over the Foxconn factory in March. Amazon says that its own auditors also visited, and picked up “two issues of concern” – the high volume of dispatch workers and the illegal underpayment of overtime. Foxconn was told to fix it.

Kara Hartnett Hurst, Amazon’s head of worldwide sustainability, responded to Li Qiang’s concerns, telling him: “Amazon takes reported violations of our supplier code of conduct extremely seriously. Amazon recognises our responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of factory workers manufacturing products for Amazon.”

The company had, she said, a code of conduct for suppliers and it used independent auditors to inspect its suppliers, who were expected to respond to any issues identified.

Last year, Bezos announced that he was considering a philanthropy strategy, “helping people in the here and now – short term – at the intersection of urgent need and lasting impact”.

Apparently short of inspiration and unable to think of anything close to home, he took to Twitter to ask for suggestions. Today’s report suggests he might have been better off just asking Alexa.

Book Review by Martin Thomas

Factfulness by Hans Rosling



UNTIL THE LATE 1950s, with decreasing conviction, the official Communist Parties in western Europe promoted as a dogma the idea that working-class living-standards were falling because an iron law of capitalism made it so, and of

course were worse than workers' living standards in the USSR.

CP writers were commissioned to select and shape statistics to "prove" that claim. In France, critical Marxists denounced this attitude as "misérabilisme".

Workers whose households had for the first time fridges, washing machines, TVs, central heating could not fail to conclude that the trade-union and political activists who told them everything was getting worse were exaggerating and hyping, so other things they said should be taken with a pinch of salt too.

And encouraging workers to wallow in seeing themselves as victims is not revolutionary. Experienced organisers know that the people in the workplace who complain most are usually not the best trade-unionists. They are too taken up with complaining about their workmates, and with self-pity.

Hans Rosling's Factfulness may appear at first to be a book whitewashing capitalism. Rosling was (he died in 2017) a reformist mixed-economy guy. But his facts are important.

He shows soberly that until 1966 over 50% of humanity lived in absolute poverty. By 2017 that was down to 9%.

Absolute poverty means having to walk every day to get (unsafe) water and gather wood for cooking; eating much the same thing every day, and not enough of it; having little or no access to health care and education.

Rosling distinguishes four broad levels of living standards in the world, with two between absolute poverty and "level 4", which is someone on \$30,000 a year or more in Australia.

The combination of capital's drive to expansion, and the work of labour movements across the world, has brought the majority to the point where they have some access to education, health care, and reading.

At the same time capital drives the environment

towards disaster, sharpens inequalities, and promotes insecurity and destructive competition. Capitalism generates the need for socialism, but also the productive and human basis for it.

As Karl Marx put it: "the proletariat, which will not permit itself to be treated as rabble, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride and its sense of independence even more than its bread".

Cartoon Corner



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