



# 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. 150 – 21 September 2018

**Branch News 150<sup>th</sup> Edition – Brisbane Ferries - Gladstone Tugs Donate - Rumours, Innuendos and Lies  
International Maritime Day - Port Workers Suffocated to Death - Dock Worker Killed at Antwerp Port  
Book Review: Unions and the Inland Empire – Cartoon Corner**

## Branch News Celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> Edition

by Bob Carnegie

OUR BRANCH NEWS has reached this milestone which we are very proud of. We have won two major awards from the QCU and it is read all around the world. We would hugely appreciate more input from members and any articles of interest will be published.

As the editor of the Newsletter, special thanks must go to Kerri Bird whose talents have made our little newsletter hopefully an interesting read for many in all fields of life.

## Brisbane Ferries

UNION MEMBERS OF Brisbane Ferries held a terrific action on Monday by calling their workmates about the importance of workers standing together as union members to ramp up the fight to secure a decent EBA.



It's a very diverse workforce from all walks of life who do an amazing job which is not reflected in the wages and conditions these workers receive from Transdev. This group of workers are being asked to toe the line because their employer undercut their contract.

We have had several members targeted as the employer is trying to scare off workers voicing their concerns to keep workers in line.

As we speak members are becoming increasingly angry about how they are going backwards whilst the cost of living keeps going up.

There are also discussions going on between workers from both the MUA and AMOU about how we can try to work together to ensure we get a fair deal and fight off the militant action from the employer who again is cutting back workers' wages through roster changes and flooding the operation with surplus labour to avoid penalty rates.

Hopefully we can get to all our members within the next two weeks to determine whether they would like to ballot the financial union members for protected industrial action. (There will be an information flyer on protected action sent to members in the coming days.)

Lastly, I'd like to thank everyone who assisted and further acknowledge the delegates who do a great job fighting for their work mates both at the negotiations table and on the job.

Members are reminded to update their contact details if they have changed. Please call the Branch on 3395 7215. United we bargain, divided we beg!

*In unity – Jason Miners*

## Gladstone Tugs Donate



G'DAY COMRADES, THIS afternoon Allan and I (from Gladstone Tugs) presented a cheque for \$500 to Kelvin's Krusade. Kelvin has quadriplegic spastic cerebral palsy, dystonia, CVI (cortical

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

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visual impairment), epilepsy and is non-verbal. He is currently fundraising for an intensive therapy treatment at NAPA in Sydney and with this donation from us all, we are making it a little easier for Kelvin and his family.

This, Comrades, is what we are all about and I would like to thank each one of you for your donations to the rolling fund. At the end of the day, this is what makes us unique as a collective and we'll always help out where we can for a good cause.

*In unity - Oscar Grey - Queensland Branch Member*

### **Rumours, Innuendos and Lies** by Bob Carnegie

AS SOME READERS of the Branch News know I have been a target of a vicious character assassination campaign from a certain tiny section of present and retired members before and since my election three years ago. This has caused not only myself but my family nothing but grief.

The toxic nature of the rumours are so damaging to my character that I have made the decision, that should it continue, I will engage an expert defamation barrister, at my own cost, to defend my good name.

I don't want to ever have to go down to a workplace again and defend my name against unprincipled and unfounded attacks circulated by a tiny group of members with an axe to grind. I've had it up to my back teeth.

As the democratically elected Branch Secretary I have had it with the minute section of members who come up to the office and spread toxic lies to the administration staff. The staff are workers. They should not be subjected to this type of negativity. Nor am I going to walk away this time.

If anyone has a problem with me, pick up the phone, attend a union meeting or come up and see me. I am happy to meet anyone, anywhere but at least have the courage to speak directly to me.

I have spent a lifetime defending workers. I am not going to see my name be sullied by a tiny, tiny grouping of 'poison tongues'.

If you think you can do a better job than I am doing by all means stand in the next election. That is what working class democracy is all about.

I've been jailed for standing up for workers! Debate is fine, character assassination is not. Don't engage in it, so either man up or shut up.

### **International Maritime Day**

ON THURSDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> September International Maritime Day celebrations took place at the QCU building in South Brisbane. About 40 members, past and present enjoyed a



delicious luncheon put together by Dave Howard (thanks again Dave!) a few beers and a good yarn.



### **Two Port Workers Suffocated to Death in Chip Carrier Hold**

TWO PORT WORKERS suffocated in the hold of wood chips carrier Uni Fortune, docked at Quy Nhon port, central Vietnam, early on the morning of 16 September 2018.



They fainted and fell into the hold. Other workers didn't dare go down to assist. Both injured workers were recovered by rescuers about an hour after the alert was raised and were found dead.

### **53 Year Old Dock Worker Killed at Antwerp Port**

THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED at the Zuidnatie terminal near the Churchill dock on the Muisbroeklaan. This has been confirmed by labor auditor Pieter Wyckaert.

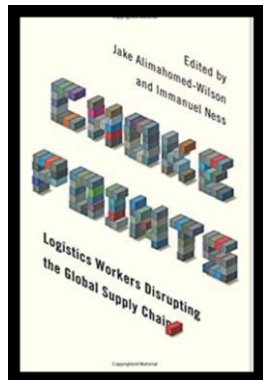


The man was busy unloading heavy pipes. A steel tube separated from the train wagon on which the tubes were stacked, the worker was buried under the tube. "The employers' organization Cepa and our Welfare at Work department started an investigation", says Wyckaert. The Shipping Police is also on site to check what exactly went wrong.

**Book Review** by Martin Thomas and Bob Carnegie

## **Unions and the Inland Empire**

Review of "*Choke Points: Logistics Workers Disrupting the Global Supply Chain*", edited by Jake Alimahomed-



Wilson and Immanuel Ness  
THE PORTS OF Los Angeles and Long Beach employ about 14,000 dockworkers, with the number fairly static as throughput has risen. The whole logistics industry around those ports employs over 500,000, with the number increasing.

Over 100,000 work in some 300 warehouses in one of the world's biggest centres of

warehousing, the Inland Empire area of Southern California, 100+km inland from Los Angeles. Their numbers increased from 40,000-odd in 1990 to over 100,000 in 2012. The Inland Empire is a microcosm of global trends.

The dockworkers, at least the permanents, are among the highest-paid manual workers in the USA. Although big US ports are generally less automated than big European, Asian, or Australian ports, the workers use complex, high-tech equipment. They have a strong union, the ILWU.

Among the warehouse workers and the truck drivers who go between the ports and the warehouses, though, things are different. Warehouse work often involves a lot of heavy lifting, bullied by managers, in stifling heat.

The big majority of warehouse workers are non-union. 40% are immigrants, many illegal. Over 70% are Latino. About 70% are under 40. About half the warehouse workers are temps. Since deregulation of the trucking industry in 1980 (by Carter, not Reagan) many of the truck drivers are classed as "independent contractors", although they may not own their trucks and are controlled by a single employer.

Blue-collar warehouse workers average about \$17,000 a year, and about two-thirds do not have health insurance from their jobs; dockworkers, about \$100,000, with health insurance. Decades ago ports around the world were among the unsafest workplaces. Now they are relatively safe. But among the warehouse workers, a 2012 survey had 65% reporting that they had had at least one workplace injury in the previous year. (More stats at [bit.ly/inl-emp](http://bit.ly/inl-emp)).

Contrary to what you might expect, Amazon warehouses are among the least bad for wages. The worst tend to be "third-party logistics" warehouses, which contract their services to the big-name corporations like Walmart.

In 2005 the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the union most famous for talking about the "organising model" of unionism in contrast to the "service model", led a split called "Change To Win" from

the US trade-union confederation, the AFL-CIO; and in 2008 CTW launched a Warehouse Workers United (WWU) union.

In the end the WWU drive failed. Mostly through legal and media-oriented campaigns, some serious redress was won for some warehouse workers along the way, but WWU was wound up after the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) withdrew funding for it in 2014. All that remains is a Warehouse Worker Resource Centre (WWRC), [www.warehouseworkers.org](http://www.warehouseworkers.org), which publicises bosses' abuses and workers' protests, and helps workers with legal or administrative complaints.

WWRC is funded by liberal foundations, not by unions. Its "board of directors" includes one representative each from the Electrical Workers Los Angeles construction electricians' local and the SEIU LA public-services local, but no-one from the Teamsters or the ILWU.

Three of the best chapters in the book discuss that experience, though each without reference to the other two. The best is by Shereryar Kasooji, who founded and still works for WWRC; the others are by Ellen Reese and Jason Struna, academics with Inland Empire connections, and by Peter Olney, who was Organising Director of the ILWU until he retired in 2013.

Though none of the chapters comments on this, the defeat of the WWU drive is typical of CTW's efforts since the 2005 split. Although CTW's stated reason for splitting was that it would make the organising drive which the AFL-CIO was unwilling to make, since 2005 CTW has done worse than the AFL-CIO at building membership.

The SEIU-CTW "organising model" mainly means building up a large staff of paid union organisers, tightly managed by the union leadership (and insulated from even informal control by the rank and file), who are quick-switched from one "leverage" (public protest) campaign to another membership-sign-up campaign to another "leverage" campaign, and so on.

Those campaigns are not useless. Pursued, often, with dedication and courage by young union organisers, they sometimes win concessions from bosses. The problem is that the whole model is still managerial rather than class-struggle-based, and lacks two essential dimensions: union democracy, and the idea of sustained, militant cross-industry campaigns for positive demands, based with and geared to workers organising themselves within their own workplaces. ([bit.ly/wl-60](http://bit.ly/wl-60), [bit.ly/wl-60x](http://bit.ly/wl-60x)).

In this case, Reese and Struna report flatly that "WWU did not pursue a traditional unionisation campaign" in the warehouses. That was reckoned too difficult because of the high number of temps and illegal immigrants among the workers. Instead, the campaign was pursued mainly through "leverage" publicity efforts targeted at Walmart. One effort focused on legal action eventually won \$21 million for workers employed by Schneider, a contractor operating distribution centres for Walmart which

Schneider in turn staffed through two labour-hire companies.

But "there was", says Kasooji, "little effort to address the issues [the warehouse workers] dealt with on a daily basis". There were some strikes, in 2012 and 2013, but the bulk of it was street protests and legal battles.

With the drivers, the Teamsters focused on organising those who were classified as wage-workers, and legal action to get others reclassified from "independent contractor" to wage-worker.

"By 2017", Kasooji reports, "thousands of port drivers have been involved with claims of misclassification... Almost every one of those claims has resulted in determinations of employee status and thousands per year in back wages and illegal deductions owed...", and cumulatively they have created "living examples, paid by the hour with benefits and 40-hour work weeks, Social Security, workers' compensation, and unemployment benefits".

"Over a dozen companies have experienced strikes" since 2014 with "massive" picketing operations. Under US law, if a strike is defined as against "unfair labour practices" by the boss - and most bosses give plenty of ground for such disputes - then the strikers have more legal protection than if it is an "economic" strike ([bit.ly/ulp-s](http://bit.ly/ulp-s)). "Wages have risen steadily... Port drivers are part of positive change where it was said to be impossible". Unions have also pushed with some success for better emissions and safety standards for trucks.

Peter Olney, the former Organising Director of the ILWU, argues that "the future for powerful dockworkers lies in conceptualising themselves as logistics workers and not dockworkers... breaking out of treating the workers as isolated individuals clinging to elite status on the waterfront, and instead making common cause with workers all along the logistics supply chain".

This approach would include organising "the new jobs in maintenance, programming, electronics, and data management that have arisen because of the implementation of new technologies on dock and near dock" - Olney argues that "there is no future in fighting the machines", rather than fighting over the terms of their introduction - but also reaching out to the truckers and warehouse workers.

The ILWU did that in the 1930s. "The union led two historic 'Marches Inland' on the West Coast mainland and in Hawaii... [soon] the workers in the warehouse division far outnumbered the members on the docks".

In the 1970s and 80s, however, the warehouses were moved further inland and the ILWU let them escape its reach. "Local 6, the warehouse power local of the Bay Area with 20,000 members in the 1950s, has been reduced to a shell of its former self with fewer than 1000 members", even though the warehouse workforce has soared. Then since 2008 the ILWU has given no help to WWU or WWRC or the Teamsters.

Olney does not comment on his unmistakable censure

of the strategy of the ILWU under his own watch as Organising Director until 2013, or on what part the fact that the ILWU stayed with the AFL-CIO until 2005, but then split from it in 2013 to stand alone, may have played.

The CTW campaign was organised with Uni Global, the world service-workers' union coordinating centre. Another chapter, the only one written by logistics workers themselves - by Amazon workers in Poland - is critical. "Uni Global Union, Ver.di [the German services union], and Solidarnosc [the one-time insurgent union movement against the Stalinist state in Poland, now transmuted into the most conservative and establishment-minded of Poland's three union confederations] stand for social partnership and business unionism as well as leadership control (top-down)".

In northern Italy, according to another chapter, warehouses are sited in "industrial peripheries far from the city centre, where a sequence of identical giant warehouses are connected by huge streets... surrounded by many... small towns, where thousands of logistics workers live...

"They come from really far away: Morocco, Tunisia, Somalia, Eritrea, Senegal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Romania, Albania... Once settled down in this region, they rarely go to the city... the logistics workers are a sort of army of the underground... enlisted by capital".

The Inland Empire in California is like that: an area of smaller towns, mainly populated by migrant workers. In Poland warehousing is like that too, except that the small-town warehouse workers are mostly Polish rather than migrant.

The Polish Amazon workers, frustrated by the official union machines, have since 2014 organised their own mini-union, IP, with about 400 members and no paid officials. IP has not been able to call strikes, because Polish anti-strike laws are even tighter than British: a valid strike ballot has to get a turnout of at least 50% of the entire workforce, not just of union members.

Still, a strike ballot called by IP, and some wildcat slowdowns, have pushed Amazon into raising wages a bit. IP has also coordinated cross-Europe Amazon rank-and-file workers' meetings ([amworkers.wordpress.com](http://amworkers.wordpress.com)).

The "from-below-only" approach of IP has not had quick success where the "from-above" approach of CTW failed: however, its effort is continuing where CTW gave up. The book can give no real example yet of an organising effort combining the resources of unions with established points of strength and a democratic, from-below, persistent push in unorganised sectors.

The chapter on Italy notes that, while warehouse work is still mostly labour-intensive, bigger employers are beginning to automate warehouses. That process threatens warehouse jobs, and a high-turnover, little-unionised workforce is ill-placed to resist the threat.

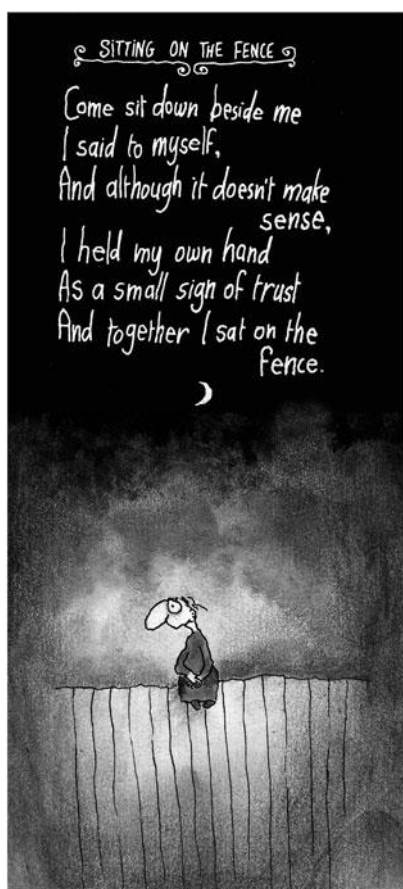
At the same time it can push employers into wanting a

more stable workforce to operate their expensive equipment, and into seeking stability and reliability by union agreements rather than union-busting. The authors, Carlotta Benvegna and Niccolo Cuppini, cite a 2016 agreement signed by major Italian delivery companies with the "rank and file" union confederation Cobas as a straw in that wind. But this remains a weather system of many cross-currents.

Other chapters in the book cover conditions or struggles of dockworkers across Europe, in Piraeus specifically, in Durban (South Africa), and in China; truckdrivers in the West Bank and Gaza; logistics workers in Turkey; tanker drivers in Indonesia; and port workers in Valparaiso.

Mostly, however, those chapters are too scanty in detail and in letting workers' voices be heard, and too heavy in sociological jargon, to be satisfying.

### Cartoon Corner



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**The Banking Royal Commission** has already uncovered evidence of widespread criminality by the big banks. And the Liberal and National Parties voted more than 20 times to stop the Royal Commission.

#### We've all been ripped off.

Big banks are out of control. Small business owners, farmers and working people have been robbed. The banks bring in record profits every year. The Liberal and National Party only agreed to hold a Royal Commission once the banks told them there was no other option. They voted more than 20 times to stop it. Now, the Liberal Party are fighting to give the big banks a \$13.2 BILLION tax cut. We can stop this tax cut. We can stop banks ripping people off.


#### We can change the rules.

#### Here's what we've heard so far:

1. Commonwealth Bank charged dead people fees for over ten years
2. Commonwealth Bank charged millions in fees and still hasn't paid them all back
3. Commonwealth Bank is being sued for failing to comply with laws targeting money laundering for terrorist groups and drug cartels
4. Westpac refused to stop pushing people into dodgy products, saying it would put them at a commercial disadvantage
5. AMP stole fees from customers for no service, lied to the regulator, trapped people in dodgy investments and charged them up to \$25,000 per month for the privilege
6. NAB handed people cash to sign others up people to bad deals
7. ANZ and NAB manipulated the banking bills swap rate for massive profits

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## Big banks have too much power

Adapted by IDC, National Students' Organisation, Teachers' Union, Mining, Energy Union, QLD Doctors' Union, MUA, etc. 2018

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