



COMPANIES

Sensational brawl: Maersk must stop "war against Australian workers"

Prior to the general meeting in Mærsk, a trade union has placed a fiercely critical advertisement in Jyllands-Posten. Behind it lies a four-year-old dispute between the Maersk subsidiary Svitzer and 600 Australian workers.



The shipping giant Maersk receives harsh criticism from trade unions for its subsidiary Svitzer's conflict with the workers in Australia.

Photo: Thomas Lekfeldt/Ritzau Scanpix/Archivfoto

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Jyllands-Posten's front page on Tuesday was adorned with a special greeting.

»Maersk and Svitzer; stop your war against Australian workers!» it read in broken Danish.

The sender is also the Australian trade union for maritime workers (MUA), which had placed an advertisement in the newspaper prior to Maersk's annual general meeting.

The trade union will reach out to the Danish shareholders in the shipping giant, whose subsidiary Svitzer has been in tough negotiations with its nearly 600 Australian employees for four years.

Svitzer, which is one of the world's largest tugboat operators and is particularly large in Australia, treats its employees "disgustingly", believes Jamie Newlyn, assistant national secretary of the MUA.

"Despite the cost of living crisis, our members at Svitzer in Australia have not received a pay rise for four years," he says to Berlingske.



This is what the ad looked like on Jyllands-Posten's front page on Tuesday 28 March.

Photo: Per

Jamie Newlyn is in Copenhagen, where he, together with trade union representatives from Danish 3F, Dutch FNV and the International Transport Workers' Union (ITF), will hold a press conference in front of Mærsk's head office, one hour before the general meeting in Mærsk begins at 15:00.

"The citizens of Denmark must realize that even though Mærsk is a national icon and are good corporate citizens in Denmark, they are not anywhere else in the world," says Newlyn.

The conflict has been a long time coming before it got here.

"Militant employer"

For a good four years, Svitzer and the unions have tried in vain to negotiate a new collective agreement in place.

According to Svitzer, since October 2020 there have been over 1,000 layoffs, while in November the company announced an indefinite lockout of all 590 employees in 17 Australian ports.

However, this move risked being so devastating to the Australian economy that the state institution Fair Work Commission blocked the lockout.

MUA's chairman, Paddy Crumlin, has in this connection [reached out](#) to Mærsk and Svitzer for being a "militant employer" that uses its monopoly in Australia to "wage war against the consumer, the economy and the workforce".

ADVARSEL!

Information til Mærsk-aktionærer, der deltager i generalforsamlingen:

* Mærsk og Svitser er på kollisionskurs med australske slæbebådsarbejdere. Svitser-chefer skader din organisations omdømme ved at angribe arbejdere og forsøge at skære i deres lønninger.

Maersk og Svitser bragte arbejdere for retten og søgte en lønnedgang på 47 % for alle slæbebådsarbejdere.

Dit ledelsesteams forhandlingstaktik er hensynsløs og risikerer din virksomheds sociale licens til at drive deres monopol-slæbebådstjeneste i australske havne.

Lige før jul sidste år beordrede Svitser-chefer, at porte skulle låses ved alle Svitser-depoter. Dette ville have stoppet de fleste skibsfartsbevægelser ved hver fastlandshavn i Australien.

Det australske samfund må ikke holdes for løsepenge for din virksomheds overskud.

Svitser beskæftiger næsten 600 slæbebådsarbejdere rundt om i Australien og kontrollerer slæbebådsoperationer i hver fastlandshavn i vores nation. De nyder næsten monopolstatus i vores slæbebådssektor.

Fagforeninger har søgt at forhandle og færdiggøre en ny ansættelsesaftale, men Svitserns ledere har nægtet at arbejde i god tro.

Efter fire år med fejlslagne forhandlinger er det åbenlyst, at Svitserns ledelse ikke ønsker at samarbejde med deres medarbejdere om at forhandle en overenskomst.

Dette er i strid med Mærsk's virksomhedsværdier og en forlegenhed for de danske sociale værdier om retfærdighed og respekt for arbejdstagere.

Det er mere end fire år siden, at en Svitser-arbejders løn er steget i erkendelse af inflation, på trods af et overskud på flere milliarder dollar, som moderselskabet Maersk har indkasseret hvert år under COVID."



***Mærsk og Svitser;
stop din krig
mod australske
arbejdere!***

The negotiations are still ongoing at the conciliation institution, explains Jamie Newlyn, who explains that Svitzer has made a proposal to the Fair Work Commission to cancel the collective agreement.

"It will send all employees back to the minimum wage, which will correspond to a pay cut of 47 percent," says Jamie Newlyn, who hopes that pressure on the shareholders of the parent company can boost the negotiations.

Svitzer: We are among the best

The shipping company has referred to Svitzer, who finds it difficult to recognize the picture drawn by the trade unions, according to Berlingske.

Communications manager Anders Crillesen writes that along the way they have participated constructively in the more than 80 negotiation meetings of the collective agreement negotiations, and that in April 2022 an "agreement in principle" was entered into, which the trade unions later "abandoned without explanation".

He explains that Svitzer will not comment on the specific case during the negotiations, but that the company has undertaken to maintain wages, pension schemes and other "essential" working conditions for employees in accordance with the collective agreement.

"In general, Svitzer offers generous remuneration to its seafarers and working conditions that are known to be among the best in the maritime industry in Australia," explains Anders Crillesen.

The Maersk company has [previously explained](#) that it is under severe pressure from its competitors. For example, Svitzer lost 130 jobs in three Australian ports during 2021.

Will not communicate rights

[The general meeting](#) of AP Møller - Mærsk A/S will be held online at 15:00 on Tuesday.

Before then, the trade unions, which line up in front of the head office at Esplanaden 50 in Copenhagen K, hope to attract as many shareholders as possible through their own online connection.



11:00pm Sydney time

Maritime Workers press conference outside Maersk Headquarters in Copenhagen



At 11pm tonight, Sydney time, a delegation of MUA representatives will stand outside the [Maersk](#) headquarters in Copenhagen with global union representatives to call on shareholders at the AP Moller Maersk AGM today to bring [Svitzer Australia](#)'s managers into line and stop their war on our tugboat workers.

You can watch the live-stream here: <https://itf-org-uk.zoom.us/j/92426612282>

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The criticism from the Australian workers is hardly the only one that looms large for Mærsk ahead of the general meeting.

The agenda also states that the shareholders AkademikerPension and LD Fonde have proposed that the company should communicate publicly about:

- Its efforts to respect human and labor rights in accordance with UN principles.
- What human rights-related financial risks Maersk has identified and how they may be addressed.

Maersk's board [does not support the proposal](#) .