



Queensland Branch News



22nd July 2014

THE CURRENT POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

There can be little doubt that there is an ongoing bombardment against workers and organised labour by the Coalition Government(s) and employers.

The Maritime Workers Journal, soon to be received by members, will give an overview of the Budget. It also includes an article in relation to the Royal Commission into Union Governance related matters. There can be little doubt the HSU have a lot to answer for in the benchmarking of how to misuse Union funds and inclusive of the exorbitant salaries paid to officials. Our reporting to members has ongoing transparency in comparison.

It is important to compare the Royal Commission into Trade Unions with what the Government have said about the "Storm Financial" debacle joined at the hip to the Commonwealth bank. Mum and Dad investors, the same Mum and Day investors that have been invited over the years to invest in privatised Public Assets. Many have been "fleeced" by rogue advisors and lost their life savings.

"Where's the Royal Commission" into these rogues – there is none – just a process of watering down of "FOFA Laws" associated with such financial advice and the CBA conducting an "independent" investigation.

Then we have seen the most recent attacks directed towards our Union in the Offshore industry, whereby the ALP – Greens and Cross Benches introduced a Disallowance motion to block the Offshore Resources Repeal Act and the introduction of the Maritime Crew Visa which allows for unfettered foreign workers in the Offshore, including the supply vessels to the Offshore from the West Australian coast. When the motion for Disallowance was achieved, the Abbott Government simply sought to change the Regulations and Law. Kow-towing to the whims of Multi-National Employers – one has to ask what foreign workers are going to add to the Australian Economy.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said "this disgraceful move replaces Australian jobs with positions available only to overseas workers with visa conditions that don't give them the protections Australian workers are entitled to... Maritime crew visas were never intended for use in the offshore resources industry.... It's a loophole being used to exploit workers. It was there to bring in Filipino, Indonesian seafarers not on Australian wages and conditions."

"It means foreign workers can be employed in Australian waters and be paid as little as \$1,000 a month.

"It will allow overseas workers to work for up to three years straight in the oil and gas zone without a visa that has Australian labour law as the legal basis underpinning their wages and conditions.

"Not only will this underhand move by the Government cost jobs, it will cost millions of dollars in taxation revenue.

"Seafarers and officers in the offshore sector pay millions of dollars in tax each year but maritime crew visa holders are not required to pay any tax in Australia because of the nature of the visa.

"To force Australian workers into unemployment while at the same time decreasing tax revenues is a ludicrous decision that shows big business is calling the shots for the Abbott Government."

Once again, this highlights a distinct hypocritical policy - if you arrive on a vessel "fleeing persecution (possibly) you are turned around; towed or put on a Navy vessel to return whence you came; yet if you want to work on a vessel for third world wages, either in the Offshore Oil and Gas industry or in the Coastal trade for that matter, you will be welcomed with open arms.

On a State level the by-election in Stafford can only be seen as a moment that the State LNP will need to deeply reflect upon.

The ALP will not hold all the answers to the objectives that we seek or for that matter organised labour seeks. However we are able to get our messages across in a viable and sustainable matter.

Members are therefore requested to become active. Think about what is happening on a political basis, not only what is happening in your own workplace and become active.How ??

Participate in Branch Monthly Meetings; join the Activist Committee established in the Branch [details available in the office] and participate in events and rallies. After all, weight of numbers and involvement with the community is the best methodology to right the wrongs.

INDUSTRIAL MATTERS

Members can compare the article above with progression of Enterprise Agreements and compare same with the number of disputes that have been “fronted” to the Fair Work Commission. If members think that there is not a linkage to industrial outcomes associated with a political agenda, then they need to re-assess same. We have a number of on-going drawn out negotiations including but not limited to:

- DP World
- Queensland
- Stradbroke Ferries
- Brisbane Ferries

Explicit in the delaying tactics of Enterprise Agreements via long and drawn out negotiations is the position of many Companies simply not to respond to correspondence from the MUA on behalf of members. This can only be deemed for what it is: a method that employees are utilising to seek to disenfranchise members from the Union.

We will simply continue to advise members of the facts. A lack of response is a consistent agenda that is being adopted by employers. When matters are not resolved, we have the option of making applications (Section 739) to the Fair Work Commission. A system that is inept when all employers are utilising and adopting the same process from a vast range of industries in an effort to cause a “traffic jam” of dispute matters akin to a 1600hrs Northbound commute on the Gateway.

Other agreements being finalised are the ASP Seagoing Ratings EA and Gardline “Coral Knight” EA.

DP WORLD

Apparently DP World via the new CEO has introduced a new cultural change into the business on an Australian level. There have been roll-out meetings of the “Compass” into each DP World Terminal regarding this objective of DP World.

At the most recent Part A negotiations the *P&O Under the Hook* magazine got a mention (October 1994); contained within is an article “Culture Change Perception Survey Contains Positive Results”. This only serves to highlight that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

Ever since the advent of Company employment, management of Stevedoring Companies have advocated “A Change in Culture”. Many of us are not really sure what that means, however one must compare that with 15 days of negotiations on a national level and 4 days on a local level without significant advancement towards agreement. Little wonder that a Protected Action Ballot has been enacted and achieved in Fremantle, with others to be sought in the other 3 Terminals of this Company.

It appears on the evidence at hand and the current position of DP World Compass, only means that they are seeking for MUA members conditions of employment to head “south”.
