

Appeal to Reason

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ALP slaughtered in Queensland Electoral Disaster

The Australian Labour Party suffered its greatest ever defeat in its 120 year history in the March 24 Queensland State Elections. In fact it is one of the greatest electoral routs of any social democratic party anywhere in the world!

To put the defeat in an historical perspective, Queensland Labour, when it was ousted from power in 1957 following the split and spent 32 years in opposition, it mustered around 29 percent of the primary vote. In this election in 2012 Labour mustered just 27 percent of the primary vote and has just seven members of parliament, remembering Queensland unlike other Australian State Parliaments has no upper house. The die has been effectively cast for a long period of conservative rule.

The great question of course is "What was the cause of the ALP's dramatic fall from power"? - bearing in mind the usual factors for a dramatic fall were simply not there.

Unemployment historically was quite low being in the mid five percent range and interest rates also at quite low levels. Certainly there was nothing like 11 percent unemployment, 20 percent interest rates and memories of a recession we had to have, when the Australian Electorate ousted the Keating Labour Government in 1996. Just as in 1996 it was not so much a vote of support for Howard. In Queensland it was a vote to get rid of

Union Elections update

The following email comes from the Secretary of "Together", the 40,000 member union formed by the amalgamation of the Queensland Public Sector Union with the QLD Branch of the Australian Services Union.

As can be seen below, the Secretary of Together discovered that some union members did not receive a mailout notifying members about the deadlines for upcoming elections in time to nominate. After having found out about this mistake, the Secretary had no hesitation in moving to reopen and extend the

Labour not so much for the election of "Can Do" Campbell and his team of conservatives.

With Queensland in 2012, I think the Electorate voted out Labour by such a huge margin because its political spin had finally spun out of control. The Bligh Government had lied and omitted facts from the people of Queensland too many times and the people had a gutful and voted accordingly.

Let us quickly examine just one area of absolute ineptitude and lies handled by the Bligh Government. Much has been written about the Bligh Governments treacherous deal to sell off some of the few remaining jewels left in the crown of the state. There is no doubt this played an important part in their electoral defeat. However I would suggest that Queensland Health Payroll debacle put the final and largest nail into the Bligh Government's electoral coffin.

Queensland Health is the largest single employer in the state with over 65000 employees. Almost everyone in Queensland knew someone affected by the payroll disaster which went on for seemingly endless months. If an employer wants to destroy morale in the workplace with lightning speed all you have to do is pay workers late, don't pay them at all, or pay them incorrectly and morale will collapse instantly. So it was with Qld Health and the Government of the day.

The QLD ALP has a mountain to climb before they will be ready for government. If they are up to the task is questionable and room for great debate.

Bob Carnegie

nomination time so that all members could take part in these union elections.

Appeal to Reason reprints this letter in order to contrast this response with that of the MUA during last year's Quadrennial election process, where (among other irregularities) MUA members did not receive printed copies of the candidates photos and statements until over a week after voting had begun.

From: alex@together.org.au
Subject: Union elections update
Date: Fri, 13 Apr 2012

Union elections update

Dear members,

Your union has incredibly strong and robust democratic structures. I am passionately committed to the democratic principles of our union and throughout my career I have worked to increase democracy within our union, in a time when many other unions have sought to limit member involvement.

Democracy means that local decisions are made by members locally, at the source, from the grassroots up and that all members have representation for matters that effect the union as a whole.

That is why our union council is structured so that a delegate is elected for every one hundred members in a subdivision and that all areas of our coverage have the same electoral rights. Every delegate spot that is left vacant after an election is a missed opportunity to build strength for our union.

While the recent elections have been advertised to members on the web and in successive emails, some members did not receive a mailout notifying of elections in time to nominate. This was an error by a contractor in distribution but I take responsibility for this failure and I am sorry. As soon as I became aware of the error I contacted the Electoral Commission and the Industrial Registry to let them know.

It is essential that all members have the opportunity to run for union office in

Snakes & ladders - DP World Sydney EBA report

It just wouldn't be a DP World Sydney EBA without *some* substantial condition being traded off. The 2011 DP World Sydney EBA – finalised just last month - was no exception.

Of course, it wasn't all bad. The national component (Part A) of the EBA included ten months back pay at five percent, annual pay rises of four percent and increases to superannuation payments. All Guaranteed Wage Employees (GWEs) – around 150 at Botany – will now become Variable Salaried Employees (VSEs), which will almost double their minimum guaranteed wage to around \$60,000 a year. Not surprisingly, the March 21 vote on the EBA saw only a handful of people voting against it.

But alongside the ladder of GWE to VSE promotions was a very nasty snake - the loss of the Grade 5 upgrade for all VSEs who drive

accordance with our rules. If one member has missed out on the opportunity to run because of a late mailout than that is one too many.

I believe that as Secretary I must take all steps to ensure democratic control of our union remains in the hands of members. As such, next week I will be urging the Industrial Registrar to reopen and extend nominations but allow existing nominations to remain. If this occurs all members will be notified of the new arrangements for elections by both mail and email.

This may interfere with the timing of the elections, currently scheduled for June, and I apologise for this. The democratic principles of our union are too important however, and we must ensure that we live up to our reputation as an open, transparent and member driven organisation.

I congratulate all those members who have put their hand up for delegate elections, and I apologise for any inconvenience caused by this error. I have always been convinced that the most powerful unions in the country are those that put a premium on democracy and member participation. Given this, I feel that there is no other option than to extend the process to ensure that all voices have the opportunity to be heard.

I commit to keeping you updated.

Yours in union,

Alex Scott

a Rubber Tired Gantry (RTG). As VSEs generally drive RTGs on most shifts, any cut to the RTG upgrade affects the take home pay of each of the over 270 VSEs – just under half of the operations workforce – at DPW Botany.

Once the downgrade from Grade 5 to Grade 4 kicks in on July 1, VSE RTG drivers will lose from \$7.58 (day shift) to \$18.93 (double time and a half) *per shift*. Depending on shifts worked and how often an RTG is driven, VSE wages will fall by anywhere from \$1500 to over \$3000 a year, saving DP World between \$500,000 to over \$1 million a year in wages.

To put this another way, the 12 percent pay rise (4% x 4% x 4%) promised in this EBA will look more like a 9 percent pay rise (4% x 1% x 4%) for VSEs.

The Grade 5 upgrade was historic for two reasons. One, because it was an over award payment won only at Port Botany during the first round of EBA negotiations in the early 1990's. Two, because it was fought for and won by Phil Toby, a militant delegate who was

sacked over a decade ago after management used trumped up charges to suspend him on full pay for a year before giving him the flick.

This historic condition should not have been given up without a fight. But, to all intents and purposes, it was. The two rounds of industrial action that did take place were never going to be enough to stop DPW. The first was a Sydney-only 24-hour stoppage that took place on November 5, 2011. Unfortunately, its timing had more to do with getting MUA members to attend that day's Occupy Sydney rally (not a bad thing in itself) than it did trying to inflict the maximum economic harm on the employer (shipping had been extremely busy in the days before, but had dropped off on November 5). The second was a round of minor work bans, which only took place on Christmas Eve, only on the day shift, and only on *the last hour of the shift*. The company was so "inconvenienced" by these bans that those who did apply them were allowed to go home early without any penalty whatsoever.

A Workers' Inquiry

The following survey was first distributed by the one and only Karl Marx in 1880. Even though it is 132 years old, it is still of great interest. It is this basic research that we need to gather from each other in order to get an accurate picture of what's happening in the workplace, particularly the smaller sites and ships. The survey's preamble states that workers' grievances must be got out on the table to prepare the way for social regeneration. Please feel free to provide answers to *Appeal to Reason*: replies can be private, or can be published if people like.

1. What is your trade?
2. Does the shop in which you work belong to a capitalist or to a limited company? State the names of the capitalist owners or directors of the company.
3. State the number of persons employed.
4. State their age and sex.
5. What is the youngest age at which children are taken off (boys or girls)?
6. State the number of overseers and other employees who are not rank and file hired workers.
7. Are their apprentices? How many?
8. Apart from the usual and regularly employed workers, are there others who come in at definite seasons?

It wasn't only industrial action that was kept to a minimum. So too was any information about the RTG downgrade itself. MUA representatives were repeatedly asked to explain the RTG downgrade, but all too often either side-stepped the issue or talked in terms of a "re-alignment" without detailing the loss of wages. The only figures we did get were given to members one week before the EBA vote, and even these were raw figures without any per shift or per year calculations. Clearly, the less that MUA members knew about the downgrade, the easier it would be to get the EBA passed.

Once again, another important condition has been traded off as part of a DP World Port Botany EBA. Surely it's time to stop playing this game of snakes and ladders. Having some members lose conditions while others maintain theirs is not good enough. It's time to take the defence of the conditions of ALL MUA members seriously and - by using genuine campaigns of industrial action - start playing to win.

Shane Bentley

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9. Does your employer' undertaking work exclusively or chiefly for local orders, or for the home market generally, or for export abroad?
 10. Is the shop in a village, or in a town? State the locality.
 11. If your shop is in the country, is there sufficient work in the factory for your existence or are you obliged to combine it with agricultural labour?
 12. Do you work with your hands or with the help of machinery?
 13. State details as to the division of labour in your factory.
 14. Is steam used as motive power?
 15. State the number of rooms in which the various branches of production are carried on. Describe the specialty in which you are engaged. Describe not only the technical side, but the muscular and nervous strain required, and its general effect on the health of the workers.
 16. Describe the hygienic conditions in the workshops; the size of the rooms, space allotted to every worker, ventilation, temperature, plastering, lavatories, general cleanliness, noise of machinery, metallic dust, dampness, etc.
 17. Is there any municipal or government supervision of hygienic conditions in the workshops?
 18. Are there in your industry particular effluvia which are harmful for the health and produce specific diseases among the workers?

19. Is the shop overcrowded with machinery?
20. Are safety measures to prevent accidents applied to the engine, transmission and machinery?
21. Mention the accidents which have taken place in your personal knowledge.
22. If you work in a mine, state the safety measures adopted by your employer to ensure ventilation and prevent explosions and other accidents.
23. If you work in a chemical factory, at an iron works, at a factory producing metal goods, or in any other industry involving specific dangers to health, describe the safety measures adopted by your employer.
24. What is your workshop lit up by (gas, oil, etc.)?
25. Are there sufficient safety appliances against fire?
26. Is the employer legally bound to compensate the worker or his family in case of accident?
27. If not, has he ever compensated those who suffered accidents while working for his enrichment?
28. Is first-aid organized in your workshop?
29. If you work at home, describe the conditions of your work room. Do you use only working tools or small machines? Do you have recourse to the help of your children or other persons (adult or children, male or female)? Do you work for private clients, or for an employer? Do you deal with him direct or through an agent?
30. State the number of hours you work daily, and the number of working days during the week.
31. State the number of holidays in the course of a year.
32. What breaks are there during the working day?
33. Do you take meals at definite intervals, or irregularly? Do you eat in the workshop or outside?
34. Does work go on during meal times?
35. If steam is used, when is it started and when stopped?
36. Does work go on at night?
37. State the number of hours of work of children and young people under 16.
38. Are there shifts if children and young people replacing each other alternately during working hours?
39. Has the government or municipality applied the laws regulating child labour? Do the employers submit to these laws?
40. Do schools exist for children and young people employed in your trade? If they exist, in what hours do the lessons take place? Who manages the schools? What is taught in them?
41. If work takes place both night and day, what is the order of the shifts?
42. What is the usual lengthening of the working day in times of good trade?
43. Are the machines cleaned by workers specially hired for that purpose, or do the workers employed on these machines clean them free, during their working day?
44. What rules and fines exist for latecomers? When does the working day begin, when it is resumed after the dinner hour break?
45. How much time do you lose in coming to the workshop and returning home?
46. What agreements have you with your employer? Are you engaged by the day, week, month, etc.?
47. What conditions are laid down regarding dismissals or leaving employment?
48. In the event of a breach of agreement, what penalty can be inflicted on the employer, if he is the cause of the breach?
49. What penalty can be inflicted on the worker if he is the cause of the breach?
50. If there are apprentices, what are their conditions of contract?
51. Is your work permanent or casual?
52. Does work in your trade take place only at particular seasons, or is the work usually distributed more or less equally throughout the year? If you work only at definite seasons, how do you live in the intervals?
53. Are you paid time or piece rate?
54. If you are paid time rate, is it by the hour or by the day?
55. Do you receive additions to your wages for overtime? How much?
56. If you receive piece rates, how are they fixed? If you are employed in industries in which the work done is measured by quantity or weight, as in the mines, don't your employers or their clerks resort to trickery, in order to swindle you out of part of your wages?
57. If you are paid piece rate, isn't the quality of the goods used as a pretext for wrongful deductions from your wages?
58. Whatever wages you get, whether piece or time rate, when is it paid to you; in other words, how long is the credit you give your employer before receiving payment for the work you have already carried out? Are you paid a week later, month, etc.?
59. Have you noticed that delay in the payment of your wages forces you often to resort to the pawnshops, paying rates of high interest there, and depriving yourself of things you need: or incurring debts with the shopkeepers, and becoming their

- victim because you are their debtor? Do you know of cases where workers have lost their wages owing to the ruin or bankruptcy of their employers?
60. Are wages paid direct by the employer, or by his agents (contractors, etc.)?
 61. If wages are paid by contractors or other intermediaries, what are the conditions of your contract?
 62. What is the amount of your money wages by the day week?
 63. What are the wages of the women and children employed together with you in the same shop?
 64. What was the highest daily wage last month in your shop?
 65. What was the highest piece wage last month?
 66. What were your own wages during the same time, and if you have a family, what were the wages of your wife and children?
 67. Are wages paid entirely in money, or in some other form?
 68. If you rent a lodging from your employer, on what conditions? Does he not deduct the rent from your wages?
 69. What are the prices of necessary commodities, for example:
 - (a) Rent of your lodging, conditions of lease, number of rooms, persons living in them, repair, insurance, buying and repairing furniture, heating, lighting, water, etc.
 - (b) Food — bread, meat, vegetables, potatoes, etc, dairy produce, eggs, fish, butter, vegetable, oil, lard, sugar, salt, groceries, coffee, chicory, beer, wine, etc., tobacco.
 - (c) Clothing for parents and children, laundry, keeping clean, bath, soap, etc.
 - (d) Various expenses, such as correspondence, loans, payments to pawnbroker, children's schooling and teaching a trade, newspapers, books, etc., contributions to friendly societies, strikes, unions, resistance associations, etc.
 - (e) Expenses, if any necessitated by your duties.
 - (f) Taxes.
 70. Try and draw up a weekly and yearly budget of your income and expenditure for self and family.
 71. Have you noticed, in your personal experience, a bigger rise in the price of immediate necessities, e.g., rent, food, etc., than in wages?
 72. State the changes in wages which you know of.
 73. Describe wage increases during so-called prosperity periods.
 74. Describe any interruptions in employment caused by changes in fashions and partial and general crises. Describe your own involuntary rest periods.
 75. Compare the price of the commodities you manufacture or the services you render with the price of your labour.
 76. Quote any cases known to you of workers being driven out as a result of introduction of machinery or other improvements.
 77. In connection with the development of machinery and the growth of the productiveness of labour, has its intensity and duration increased or decreased?
 78. Do you know of any cases of increases in wages as a result of improvements in production?
 79. Have you ever known any rank and file workers who could retire from employment at the age of 50 and live on the money earned by them as wage workers?
 80. How many years can a worker of average health be employed in your trade?
 81. Do any resistance associations exist in your trade and how are they led? Send us their rules and regulations.
 82. How many strikes have taken place in your trade that you are aware of?
 83. How long did these strikes last?
 84. Were they general or partial strikes?
 85. Were they for the object of increasing wages, or were they organized to resist a reduction of wages, or connected with the length of the working day, or prompted by other motives?
 86. What were their results?
 87. Tell us of the activity of the courts of arbitration.
 88. Were strikes in your trade ever supported by strikes of workers belonging to other trades?
 89. Describe the rules and fines laid down by your employer for the management of his hired workers.
 90. Have there ever existed associations among the employers with the object of imposing a reduction of wages, a longer working day, of hindering strikes and generally imposing their own wishes?
 91. Do you know of cases when the government made unfair use of the armed forces, to place them at the disposal of the employers against their wage workers?
 92. Are you aware of any cases when the government intervened to protect the workers from the extortions of the employers and their illegal associations?
 93. Does the government strive to secure the observance of the existing factory laws

- against the interests of the employers? Do its inspectors do their duty?
94. Are there in your workshop or trade any friendly societies to provide for accidents, sickness, death, temporary incapacity, old age, etc.? Send us their rules and regulations.
 95. Is membership of these societies voluntary or compulsory? Are their funds exclusively controlled by the workers?
 96. If the contributions are compulsory, and are under the employers' control, are they deducted from wages? Do the employers pay interest for this deduction? Do they return the amounts deducted to the worker when he leaves employment or is dismissed? Do you know of any cases when the workers have benefitted from the so-called pensions schemes, which are controlled by the employers, but the initial capital of which is deducted beforehand from the workers' wages?
 97. Are there cooperative guilds in your trade? How are they controlled? Do they hire workers for wages in the same ways as the

capitalists? Send us their rules and regulations.

98. Are there any workshops in your trade in which payment is made to the workers partly in the form of wages and partly in the form of so-called profit sharing? Compare the sums received by these workers and the sums received by other workers who don't take place in so-called profit sharing. State the obligations of the workers living under this system. May they go on strike, etc. or are they only permitted to be devoted servants of their employers?
99. What are the general physical, intellectual and moral conditions of life of the working men and women employed in your trade?
100. General remarks.

[From *La Revue socialiste*, April 20, 1880].

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