

OnCall

**FREE NEWSPAPER
FOR and BY CALL CENTRE WORKERS**
Issue 2 February 2002

the **ACTION** *edition*

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contact us

E-MAIL oncall_news@hotmail.com

WEB <http://www.angelfire.com/indie/oncall>

PHONE (02) 9594 0640

SNAIL PO Box 4, Enmore, NSW 2042

news call

NEWS FROM CALL CENTRES AROUND AUSTRALIA



1,700 Optus Workers Forced to Take 3 weeks Annual Leave.

Optus have announced that their Business Division will close for 3 weeks from 24 December and that all staff except for a few in critical areas will be forced to take annual leave. This will have an impact on up to 1700 workers. Apparently Optus believe that this initiative will save them \$14M.

Many staff have already made plans and booked holidays for other times during the year, and staff who do not have 3 weeks leave are going to face tough times. There are reports of management coercion to force employees to fill in leave application forms.

The CEPU have notified the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) of a dispute.

For more info contact: Mark Brownlow, CEPU, 0419 624 640

Call-centre worker is 'delegate of the year'

AAPT members in Bendigo are determined to build on the recognition won by ACTU Delegate of The Year, Leonie Saunders.

"Our organising has been about community. Even in major cities it's important to remember that we are part of a community and we all do better if that community succeeds. Unionism is not blinkered"

Less than a year ago, she became only the second worker on the site to take the union option. Today, more than 100 AAPT workers in Bendigo are members of the CPSU and they are agitating for a certified agreement. Saunders left behind an active structure headed by six delegates and three deputy delegates.

Organising in AAPT was never going to be easy. Saunders and her workmates were confronted by a hostile company prepared to run union representatives off the property.

Unable to meet on the site, they started holding monthly get-togethers at nearby Darby O'Gills, one of several Bendigo businesses that provide discounts to CPSU members as the result of an initiative from AAPT members.

Members have been further bound together by their campaign to raise Christmas funds for local charity, St Lukes Family Care. When AAPT refused to let them hold a sausage sizzle on its property, staff got a council permit to stage it nearby, allowing other CPSU members and workers from the Bendigo Trades Hall to join them in the fund raiser.

Saunders was a central figure in the getting the rapidly-growing discount scheme off the ground.

"It's a two-way street," she explained. "It benefits small local retailers as well as our members.

"Our organising has been about community. Even in major cities it's important to remember that we are part of a community and we all do better if that community succeeds. Unionism is not blinkered," she said.

Saunders described her Delegate of The Year Award as "wonderful".

"It's recognition for everyone. The members in Bendigo, the other delegates and officials."

Primus Workers Achieve Payrise and Trade Union Training Leave

Workers at Primus have achieved the first certified agreement in a call centres outside Telstra.

The Primus deal - registered under the federal Workplace Relations Act - featured a four percent wage increase over 12 months; increased penalties for shift and weekend work; along with trade union training leave.

It also introduced new wage and classification systems, 'jump-up' rates for labour hire staff and permanent status for long-term casuals.

CPSU Communications Section secretary, Adrian O'Connell, described the document as a "benchmark" for ongoing negotiations with other telcos.

DIRECT(ORY) ACTION

THIRTY temps at the Pacific Access call-centre in Sydney have permanent jobs at last, thanks to the tireless efforts of workplace delegate, and one-time priest, Madi Varoka. When their initial applications for permanent employment were knocked back, staff contacted Varoka. After a few setbacks, their petitions, letters and workplace meetings finally paid off with job offers.

The results of Varoka's organising have been dramatic - over 100 new union members last year. His high workplace profile means staff approach him to join the union,



ANGRY, COMMITTED, UNION WOMEN

not the other way round. "The hunter has become the hunted, just the way I like it" he laughed.

'Angry, Committed Women' Win Payout

A union picket line has forced the operators of a close Sydney chat line to backdown and pay the entitlements of ASU members retrenched without notice or pay.

The former chat line employees set up the picket last month when they were given 'ten minutes notice' and later evicted from their Circular Quay workplace by security guards and police.

Workplace representative and former staff supervisor Chantal Jameson says it's paid to belong to the union because only union members got paid.

"Those who didn't join the picket got nothing because they didn't stand up and fight to get anything. We won because the picket made our ex-bosses realise they were dealing with a trade union with guts and a group of angry, committed women."

Sacked for using a four letter word.

Call centre worker Meil Mac Intyre was sacked for using a four letter word.

We was able to present a successful case for unfair dismissal and has returned to work.

"I was under a lot of extra pressure when the incident occurred and I didn't deserve to be sacked for it.

"I'm fortunate I has the support of my colleagues and the union. I believe if we don't stand up for what's fair we'll never be treated fairly."

This is what he won:

- Full reinstatement
- A higher rate of pay
- Six weeks back pay
- The right to be fully represented by his union.

-- Editor



DELEGATE CONFERENCE



WHAT HAPPENED WHEN 1223 WORKERS 'STAYED ON THE SCRIPT'

One worker at the conference told a story about their job at a Telstra 1223 call centre (White Pages). When automation/voice recognition was first introduced staff were instructed that when the customer came through the staff member had to say "You requested ..." and repeat back to the customer exactly what they had just said. For example "You requested 'John Smith'"

Since many customers hated the voice recognition software, many of them swore into the phone. Many Telstra workers then 'worked to rule' and would say things like "You requested 'F*** I hate this F***ing machine'"

Early December, the On Call editors attended a call centre delegates conference ran by the ACTU. There were about 10 call centre workers in attendance as well as a couple of union organisers. Most of the workers were from incoming call centres.

Some Common Problems and Some Decent Solutions

A large part of the first day of the conference was dedicated to talking about the common problems that many of us face as call centre workers. We also talked about what sort of things we could demand of management to deal with these problems. Below is our summary of the discussion.

Customer Abuse

Most people talked about how customer abuse had quite a stressful effect on them. If a customer takes their anger at the company or the rest of the world out on us, it is really emotionally draining and upsetting. Most of the time it isn't our fault, in fact it's managements fault – not rostering enough people on, not providing quality services or products – yet call centre workers are the ones who cop the abuse, and then management expect you to just shrug it off and get on with the next call. One of the things we could do would be demand some time to recompose ourselves after stressful customers. Even more importantly people thought it was important to get management to address the things that cause customers stress, like long queues and providing options for people to skip the automation and voice recognition software.

Monitoring

Many people talked about how management monitoring of calls caused a great deal of stress. Most people felt that while management would say they monitored calls for 'coaching' or 'training' purposes, the reality was that they were just doing it to find faults in people's calls and then harass them about it. Instead of using monitoring to try to help staff improve management tended to use it to just pick on little things and tell people they are stupid or

to hurry up. People talked about how they would be punished for 'not staying on the script', when often the scripts are quite inappropriate

People also talked about how monitoring was often extremely excessive, controlling and an invasion of privacy. People talked about how every physical act they took would be monitored down to the 100th of a second. In many centres people had to log on and off to go to the toilet. In one centre staff had only 9 minutes per day which they could be logged off the phone, in which time they were expected to go to the toilet, do any left over paper work, and maybe even have a quick breather. Many people talked about how they did have to log off to do paper work, and that this was registered as 'taking a break'! At one centre staff had to be back at their phone within 15 seconds of the time their break ended or it would be recorded and could effect their monthly bonus.

People also talked about the problems of remote monitoring, which meant that you never know when you are being monitored, and how some centres have the ability to look at your screen and send messages on to the computer screen to tell you to hurry up on the call.

In general people wanted to be told when they were being monitored, for it to happen less and for it to be directed at genuine staff development, not just for petty fault finding or for humiliating and picking on staff.

Valuing Speed Over Quality Service

Virtually everyone had the problem that management forced them to hurry up so much that it meant that they couldn't give quality service to customers. One person talked about how the average bonus for a good Mean Service Time (MST – which is the speed which you answer calls) was \$400 per month, while the bonus for quality service was on average about \$18 per month. People felt that these priorities caused quite a lot of stress on staff, and was a form of abuse, because you actually feel an obligation to customers and management push you to choose between doing a

good job and getting your bonus, and between helping customers and pleasing the boss.

Job security and abuse of casual and labour hire (agencies)

Virtually everybody thought that management was totally abusing the use of casual labour and labour hire agencies. Most companies were increasing the number of casuals and labour hire. Casuals and agency workers had less rights and much less job security. People talked about how many bosses had 'permanent casuals' – which should be a contradiction in terms. In some places management tried to play agency and permanent staff off against one another – giving them different conditions and then helping to foster resentment between the two groups. Staff in some call centres have managed, through campaigns and struggle, to get workers transferred from casual and agency to permanent/full-time.

Discrimination and 'black-listing' through rosters and shifts

Most people talked about how management uses the rosters to punish anyone who speaks up or gets off-side with management. For casuals, management often punish them for being sick or for raising a problem by cutting their shifts all together. Permanent staff can't loose hours, but they can get put on bad shifts and not get days off that they request. People felt that this was difficult to deal with, except by trying to raise issues with management collectively so that they couldn't just target anyone person.

Lack of Basic Union Rights

Many companies were also trying to break the law by banning union organisers from the premises or ban them from staff eating areas. The conference leaders were quick to remind us that unionism starts from a single union member. Even 'strong' union industries like coal mining were unorganised 100 years ago. Call centres are a new industry. Only by taking up the fight can it become an industry where we can all count on the solidarity of our work-mates.

-- Editors



The Right to Strike



Until recently I was a call centre worker with the TAB and had been for the past 14 years, but in July of this year our jobs were taken by 'TABITHA', a voice interactive unit that works 24/7 and asks for nothing in return, merely a support staff of under 100 workers replacing 500-600.

In July 2000 the TAB management announced to their staff that the Ultimo call centre would close and that staff would be relocated to the Granville site. At the same time Tabitha would be introduced to the public, along with a \$10 bet minimum if customers wanted to keep using humans. Tabitha, however, would accept bets from 50c, this policy forced many customers to use the new technology as it was clear that most customers prefer to speak to a human operator.

Workers felt that their job security was on the line and many felt that they would not be able to relocate. Workers felt that they deserved redundancy payments, however management and the union that we had belonged to for many years both disagreed. The reaction from management didn't surprise us, but we were appalled that our union wouldn't support us! Workers at the TAB had traditionally belonged to the Federated Clerks Union, which is now known as the ASU Clerical & Administrative Branch. This union believed that they had the right to dictate to workers in the same way as the bosses and the two seemed to work well together and resented our input.

In August 2000, a small group of us (less than 10) met to discuss what was happening at our work and what we could do about it, the answer was get organised! This appeared at the time a daunting task but our numbers grew quickly and in October almost 200 workers attended 2 union meetings held on a Saturday, outside of work hours. At both meetings workers passed a unanimous resolution to take Industrial action on Melbourne Cup Day if all our demands were not met.

We asked for:

- Voluntary redundancies
- Pay rise of 6.5%
- Permanent roster categories for anyone with more than 6 months service
- Some OHS issues
- That operators and new technologies remain on an even playing field - no minimum bet on humans

After this meeting management was running scared, they thought that we would strike on Melbourne Cup, they called an emergency meeting with the union to discuss our demands. An offer of a 10.5% wage rise was made and the union decided to take this to members and put it to a vote, in doing so they agreed that there would be no strike on Melbourne Cup Day and ignored all our other demands. Needless to say workers felt very ripped off and disappointed. We then elected a new team of delegates, thinking that our organiser would now have to listen to us as we had been elected by our workmates and we believed that we had the right to set our own agenda and that the union would have to represent us and take our demands to management.

Bosses want their staff to be isolated from one another within their work environments as it is easier to intimidate an individual who is unaware of his or her rights

During January and February of this year, we met twice with the TAB Management team and the union and were getting nowhere, then before the third and most crucial meeting our union leaders; organiser D. Margerison and branch secretary M. Want walked out on their Democratically elected delegates leaving us to face the management team on our own. We were now in a position where we had to organise against both bosses and the union who had misrepresented us for so long and disagreed with our basic workers right to strike.

We resigned en masse from the Clerical & Administrative Branch and joined the ASU Services union who had agreed to represent us and see that all of our

demands were looked at. Management refused to deal with the new union even though we had 80% of the membership.

Ultimo workers now decided that a strike was the only option left and in early April about 200 workers walked off the job. On the day of the strike managers and our former branch secretary Michael Want stalked the 2 floors inside the building, all trying to scare workers with lock-out rumours. Security guards were hired and the company's upper management and solicitors blocked every exit and shut down all lifts. Scabs were paid \$20 & \$100 shopping vouchers to keep working.

In spite of these tactics most of us walked out proudly on the day and attended a rally and union meeting outside the building. All who have since applied for redundancies have been successful, however Tabitha has been released and shifts have dropped dramatically for those who relocated. The battle continues to protect the job security of those who remain!

Our ability to organise our workplace and our resolve to strike got us the redundancies we deserved, however our other issues were lost in the battle of the unions which ensued and the Clerks union remains in control of the Granville site, (we could never get information to this site successfully) they have also stopped the services union taking anymore new members.

The right to strike is the most basic right and resource that any worker has and to be denied it is to be made powerless. Bosses want their staff to be isolated from one another within their work environments as it is easier to intimidate an individual who is unaware of his or her rights. Solidarity and communication between workers are essential for an organised workplace. Talk to one another, discover what your issues are, start meeting even if your group is small to begin with, you could be surprised at how quickly it grows. And, if you want to join a union put some basic questions to your organiser... eg. Do they believe in a worker's right to strike? If the answer is anything other than a resounding 'YES!'BEWARE

--MARA



ISSUES, DISCUSSION & RANTS!

CHATTING AT WORK

I work in a typical market research firm. Most people there treat it like a sideline job. They're waiting to graduate or to find employment in their field. There are so many interesting and nice people at work, and we all have an opinion to share.

The work is mostly dialling the phone until someone answers and then convincing them to help you by doing a survey. There's a lot of time when we don't really need to concentrate, the work is so repetitive. So we talk quietly, and we read small articles or light fiction. Talking keeps us happy (which helps us to get surveys), and reading stops our brains from drying up between calls.

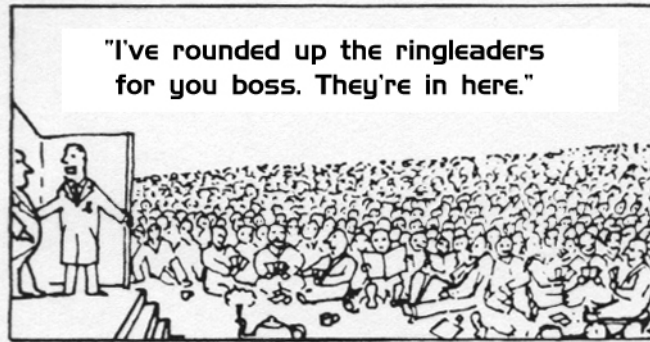
This is generally ok with the supervisors until the rate of work falls. Then they crack down on reading and talking, blaming our slowness on our 'lack of concentration'. In fact it could be due to any number of factors. Like people not wanting to do surveys when the football is on, or when the beach beckons all of Australia on a Sunday afternoon. When everything is going well, chatting is ignored, but when rates slip, chatting is blamed for it. In fact, chatting at work keeps us happy at work, and helps us to do our jobs.

The real issue isn't chatting then, its discipline. The supervisors want us to know who is in charge of us. When factors beyond our control keep us from working well we are told that it is our fault. Any other reasoning would lessen the power of the supervisor, by forcing them to admit that our job is a difficult one. If that were recognised, then they'd feel bad for the way they treat us - poor pay, poor hours (no-one wants to do a survey on Sunday, and no-one wants to do the same survey for 8 hours). They'd have to realise that consultation is for the rank and file as well as for managers. That we need more than 10 minutes off the phones every two hours to feel refreshed.

--Nonny

ACCOUSTIC SHOCK

Acoustic shock is a medical condition that particularly affects people in call centres. It can happen as a reaction to a sudden, unexpected, high pitched sound coming through your phone. The symptoms include earache, headache, ear pain, dizziness, nausea, temporary hearing loss,



and tinnitus (ringing in the ears).

Your call centre should:

- √ Use engineering controls to avoid sudden loud noises.
- √ Set volumes on phone equipment so they can be used at the mid range of the manual volume control.
- √ Use headsets that rest outside the ear instead of ones that sit inside it.
- √ Provide ongoing training on using equipment, including volume control.
- √ Minimise 'ambient noise' (noise inside the call centre).
- √ Develop and use guidelines on helping people who have suffered a sudden loud noise.
- √ Have staff take hearing tests before they start working on the phones.
- √ Making sure mobile phones aren't used close to normal phones, either within the call centre or by callers.

For most call centres, they won't put all these recommendations into effect. This is simply because they cost money. It's cheaper to let the 'human resources' run the risk, and replace us when they have to. With unemployment as high as it is, there's no economic reason for management to spend money to hold on to staff.

In other words, most of the time management will make an effort in this area if workers force them to.

--James Hutchings

james.hutchings@ato.gov.au
PO Box 503, Newtown NSW 2042

BLACK LISTED!

You know that there's lots of work to do, but you're not being offered any. Some people get the days off they request but not you? Maybe you've been blacklisted.

Call centres thrive on having lots of casual workers who they can call in at a moments notice, and then get rid of when the need arises. In this way they can populate the shift as thickly as they like when

there's lots of work going and thin it out when there's only a little work. It also acts as a deterrent to workplace organisation. How can you threaten a strike when you know that the company can ring around and get workers in to break the strike immediately?

So it pays call centres not to sack people outright. But they can weed out the undesirables in other ways. Full time and part time workers are guaranteed a number of shifts per week/month. Casuals are not, and to compensate they get a 25% pay increase over the others. In many call centres, the entire workforce is casual -higher rates, but no guaranteed income. A casual can be left for weeks without income, then be expected to comeback to work 40 hr/wk when the company requires.

Shift control is used punitively in many call centres. When a supervisor develops a grudge against you, or when you make some noise about workplace procedures, or just join a union, you might find yourself out of work but technically still employed. Its a brutal way to send brutal message to workers: step out of line and lose your job. When you finally come back to work after seven weeks with no pay, you'll be ready to lick the ground to keep your job. That's just what they want, but its not always what they get.

If you know people at work, call them to see whether shifts are full or empty. If you are a good worker, go in during the shift to ask for work. The secretive blacklisting can't go on in public.

Organise in secret. When you're organising in your workplace, start off quietly and don't let supervisors know that you're a 'ringleader'. They can punish one person by with-holding work, but they can't punish the majority of the workforce in this way. If you can build solidarity with your workmates it is harder to use blacklisting against you.

-- Nonny



STATISTICS AT WORK

In a call centre, where the work is done in units of sales, customers helped, interviews completed, there is a dangerous focus on performance statistics. Statistics are easily misinterpreted and abused. They do not take into account special circumstances beyond the worker's control.



Statistics can only measure the quantity of work performed, not its quality. For example, one telesales worker collects five sales for \$10 each; another collects one sale of \$100. If the statistics focus on number of sales, then the less lucrative worker is rewarded. If the statistics focus on the total value of sales, then the worker who has made more calls and more sales is unrewarded for their effort because of their bad luck reaching only small purchasers.

Statistics focus on volume, encouraging workers to work harder, faster and less carefully. Customer service becomes a much lower priority.

At the worst, statistics encourage cheating at work. When a worker cannot legitimately accomplish the performance targets, they might cheat. Cheating is bad for you (if you're caught), bad for your fellow workers (by raising the performance targets for them too), and bad for the boss (who can't rely on the work they pay you for).

Statistics are very useful, but must be used with care and understanding. For instance, you might see that your rate of service is 6.25 customers per hour. How can you serve 0.25 customers? It is supposed to mean that if you worked for an-

other 4 hours, you would have serviced one more customer. It doesn't take into account the chance that there might not be one more customer, or that the level of service required by some would make the extra one impossible.

Statistics are useless unless they are understood properly. So often we are spurred on at work to unreachable standards because it is 'statistically possible', not because it is actually possible. Statistics are the mathematics of chance, yet chance is often ignored in their application in the working environment. The calculations assume a level field of inquiry - any one event has as much chance of occurring as any other event and that chance is always the same. Grand Final day, civil war, or federal elections are not supposed to matter, but everyone working on the ground level of customer service knows that it does.

In statistical calculations, the interval is vital. Sometimes, the measurement might be taken over a varying time period. For instance, the counter measures the time between customers served, rather than the number of customers

served per fixed unit of time. This means that if you score a strike (by completing a sale, an interview, serving a customer) within the first 15 minutes of the hour your rate will be 4 strikes per hour. If you score a strike in the last minutes of the hour, your rate is 1 per hour. In both instances, you have only scored one strike in the hour. The difference is how those similar achievements are evaluated when it comes time to fire 'less productive' workers and reward 'more productive' workers.

Statistics are arbitrary measures of performance. They have no absolute or final meaning. Yet time and time again, we must conform to the ridiculous expectation of the numbers. What can be done?

Apart from being arbitrary, performance statistics encourage competition that goes beyond healthy toward being divisive. A difference of 0.1 between achievements means nothing, yet it can mean the difference between first and second place on the statistics ladder, between getting an achievement bonus and not, or being allowed to keep working or not.

--NONNY MAUS

SPEEDUPS CAUSE BREAKDOWNS



SUPPORT THE BREAKDOWN OF YOUR CHOICE
Leslie Fish (*Industrial Worker*, August 1975)



DIRECT ACTION SERIAL

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) began as a union of industrial workers in the United States in 1905. Since then they have always been on the side of the most casualised, underpaid and boss-hassled workers. In Australia Wobblies were persecuted by the police for opposing conscription during World War One.

We think the IWW have some useful things to say, many of their pamphlets are considered and informative. We've decided to publish their pamphlet A WORKERS GUIDE TO DIRECT ACTION in serial form. In this issue we've got a chapter introducing direct action. Look out for solidarity, slowdowns, work to rule, the good work strike, sit down strikes, selective strikes, whistle blowing, sick-ins, dual power and monkey wrenching in coming editions of On Call. All these techniques are good for two basic reasons. They keep us feeling good about the work we're doing and focus on the shitty conditions we do it under. They are forms of action you can take while you're still at work earning money. They are the strikes you get paid for.



The indignity of working for a living is well-known to anyone who ever has. Democracy, the great principle on which our society is supposedly founded, is thrown out the window as soon as we punch the time clock at work. With no say over what we produce, or how that production is organised, and with only a small portion of that product's value finding its way into our paychecks, we have every right to be pissed off at our bosses.

Ultimately, of course, we need to create a society in which working people make all the decisions about the production and distribution of goods and services. Harmful or useless industries, such as arms and chemical manufacturing, or the banking and insurance scams, would be eliminated. The real essentials, like food, shelter, and clothing, could be produced by everyone working just a few hours each week.

In the meantime, however, we need to develop strategies that both prefigure this utopia AND counteract the day to day drudgery of contemporary wage-slavery. The IWW believes that direct action in the workplace is the key to achieving both these goals. But what do we mean by direct

action?

Direct action is any form of guerrilla warfare that cripples the boss' ability to make a profit and makes him/her cave in to the workers' demands. The best-known form of direct action is the strike, in which workers simply walk off their jobs and refuse to produce profits for the boss until they get what they want. This is the preferred tactic of the ACTU "business unions," but is one of the least effective ways of confronting the boss.

The bosses, with their large financial reserves, are better able to withstand a long drawn-out strike than the workers. In many cases, court injunctions will freeze or confiscate the union's strike funds. And worst of all, a long walk-out only gives the boss a chance to replace striking workers with a scab (replacement) workforce.

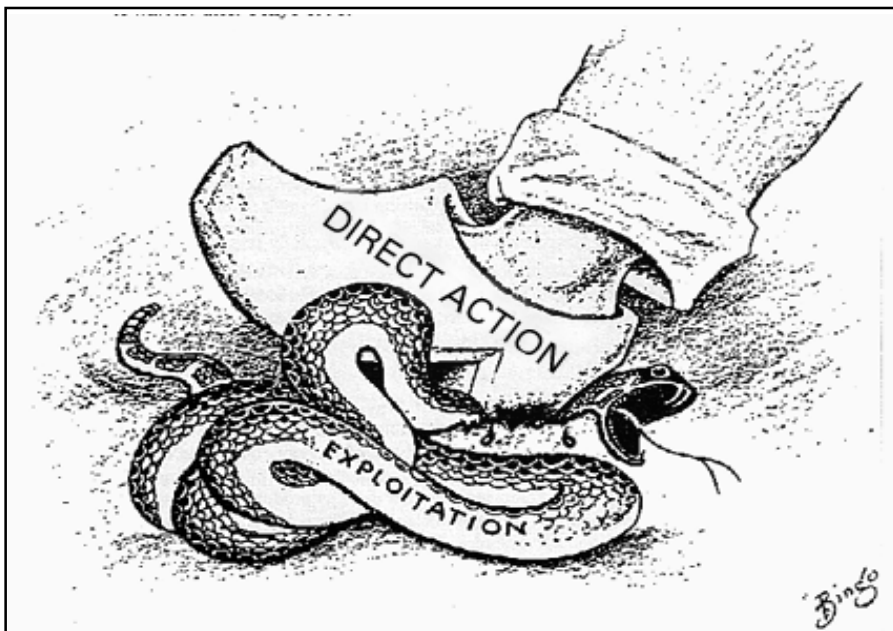
Workers are far more effective when they take direct action while still on the job. By deliberately reducing the boss' profits while continuing to collect wages, you can cripple the boss without giving some scab the opportunity to take your job. Direct action, by definition, means those tactics workers can undertake themselves, without the help of government agencies, union bureaucrats, or high-priced lawyers. Running to the



Industrial Relations Commission for help may be appropriate in some cases, but it is NOT a form of direct action.

What follows are some of the most popular forms of direct action that workers have used to get what they wanted. Yet nearly every one of these tactics is, technically speaking, illegal. Every major victory won by Labour over the years was achieved with militant direct actions that were, in their time, illegal and subject to police repression. After all, until the 1930's, the laws surrounding labor unions were simple -- there were none. Most courts held labour unions to be illegal conspiracies in restraint of "free trade," and strikers were routinely beaten and shot by police, state militia, Federal troops, and private security goons.

The legal right of workers to organise is now officially recognized, yet so many restrictions exist that effective action is as difficult as ever. For this reason, any worker contemplating direct action on the job -- bypassing the legal system and hitting the boss where s/he is weakest -- should be fully aware of labor law, how it is applied, and how it may be used against labor activists. At the same time, workers must realize that the struggle between the bosses and the workers is not a badminton match -- it is war. Under these circumstances, workers must use what works, whether the bosses (and their courts) like it or not.



read more at <http://flag.blackened.net/huelga/texts/guide2da.htm>



WEB SITES FOR CALL CENTRE WORKERS

We've got together a few interesting links for you to follow-up on your browser at home or work

OSIRIS

This site contains the full text of Australian Federal Awards, Agreements, Decisions, Variations and Decision Summaries from the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Note it doesn't have state Award or state based EBAs.

This site can be very useful for locating a copy of your Award or Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. In many call centres the employer will only follow the your Award or EBA selectively. Get to know your rights! Read what you are legally entitled to. You can also look at EBA and Awards from other industries and see what sort of things are possible if you and your workmates get organised.

<http://www.osiris.gov.au/>

Call Central

This is an information and support website and phone line for call centre staff.

It's been set up by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) to help call centre workers find out about their rights and to find out which trade union covers their workplace.

<http://www.callcentral.com.au>

PH: 1300 365 205

Know Your Rights

This is part of the call central website and has information about what call centre workers legal rights are in relation to pay, work and family, monitoring, management style, breaks from the phones, targets, hours of work and union rights.

<http://www.vtown.com.au/vunions/callcentral/rights.cfm>

Call Centre Managers Association (CCMA)

This is the website of a major call centre employers association (or 'bosses union'). It doesn't have heaps of information that's accessible to us ordinary folk without a membership number, but it got some interesting stuff nonetheless.

<http://www.ccma.asn.au/>

An Interview with Two Call Centre Workers

This is an interview with two workers employed in the technical support call centre of an Australian Internet service provider. It's a little old (1998), but it's a good discussion of the issues and problems many of us face at work.

<http://www.helpline4u.co.uk/callcntrqa.htm>

Call Centre Managers Forum

This is a funny website run by one person, dedicated to discussing topics of interest to call centre managers. Some interesting info on various issues like Voice Recognition Software and automation, along with some pretty classical union bashing.

<http://www.callcentres.com.au/>

Industrial Workers of the World

This is the website of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a group of workers dedicated to grassroots, revolu-

tionary industrial unionism. Since we've taken an article from their website, we thought we'd include their website for you to check out.

<http://www.iww.org/>

"The Sacrificial HR Strategy in Call Centres"

This is an article by three academics from University of NSW which talks about the usefulness of "The Sacrificial HR Strategy in Call Centres". It talks about how HR managers can push call centre workers to provide both high service quality and high output by burning them out and replacing them every 18 months to 2 years. This is the science of exploitation raised to the level of theory. Very evil, yet enlightening stuff.

<http://www.callcentres.net/news/hrstrategy.pdf>

Don't get whipped at work, get organised!



OnCall meet regularly. Come along to meetings. Be involved in making OnCall so you can keep reading OnCall

Learn layout, writing, editing and reporting skills in a supportive environment with other call centre workers. We know where you're at!

We would also love it if you actually sent an article, a letter or some news about what's happening at your workplace.

For our contact details see page 1.

