

Port Botany and Brisbane workers oppose Hutchison's mass sackings

Our reporters
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Striking workers at Hutchison container terminals in Sydney and Brisbane spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about the job cuts by the multi-million dollar corporation and the dangers now facing the working class.

One of the almost 100 sacked by Hutchison late last Thursday, **Hanna** worked as a clerk and heavy-machinery driver for Hutchison in Brisbane. She lost her job, as did her father and sister who were employed at Port Botany.

“My whole family has been sacked as well as my gang, the people I worked with each day. I was in the first influx of people who started, which was two years ago now. It will be a real struggle to find a new job, I’m young so I may be able to reinvent myself and find new work. For a lot of the blokes here this is all they have done and they’ll find it difficult.

“They are trying to reduce their workforce but there are not too many companies who are going to foreclose after spending \$700 million on terminals. There’s definitely a different agenda going on. I don’t think any of this has been fair and I don’t think we should be acting fairly in return.”

Tony, who was previously employed in cargo logistics, decided to leave and work for Hutchison. He described the initial recruitment process.

“At the interview I said I want a job that will stay for the rest of my working career and the Hutchison’s lady said, ‘If you get the job here you can rip up your resume.’ I left a good job and now I’m on the street. I’m 47 and the older you are the harder it is to find a job. I still have a mortgage and I have two young kids.

“I’ve never been unemployed because I’ve always done the right thing. I haven’t had one sick day here for 18 months and that was all about trying to get this place up and running. We thought by doing that we would be

looking after ourselves for the rest of our working lives and for the future for our children.

“They wanted a workforce that was very flexible so they arranged a 30-hour week and no roster. If they needed you they would call you the day before. You lived off your phone, which disrupted your family because you couldn’t make any plans.

“We ran a system called six-and-out, which meant you worked six days in a week and then you were off for a day and then back on. This set-up suited the company more than the worker. A lot of workers were lured over because they had been casual, a lot of them decided to forego their redundancies to come over.

“I’m not fighting for myself, I’m fighting for the future of my children but if I don’t have a job how am I going to help my children get through life? I want to have paid my mortgage but if I don’t have a home when I retire and I can’t go to aged-care where am I supposed to go? I’ll just be one more homeless person walking around central station.

Tony said safety was a big problem at Hutchison. “We had vehicles with wire sticking out of tyres and the company said, ‘Oh, it’s ok, they should be fine’—until it explodes and kills somebody. We’ve had quite a few accidents here: people with broken fingers and one guy fell through a platform on a ship and had to be airlifted out. He’s one of the people that they’ve sacked. He was a team leader with 30 years’ experience.”

Jesse, who helped set up Hutchison’s terminal in Brisbane, has been retrenched. “I am the sole earner in the family. We’ve got three kids and a mortgage. I actually left a good job to come to this company because I saw that coming to Hutchinson was a chance for a better future.”

Spencer had seven years’ experience at Patrick

stevedores at Port Botany but decided to leave and work at Hutchison. “They [Patrick] were automating and going through redundancies so I saw a career opportunity pop up here and went for it. At the start we put in a lot more time than we did over at Patrick. We thought, ‘Hutchison is a world leader, it could take off and be bigger and better than all the other operators.’

“We won’t be going back to work under anything less than the conditions we had before because otherwise there’ll be a flow-on effect to the other two terminals and workers all over,” he said.



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