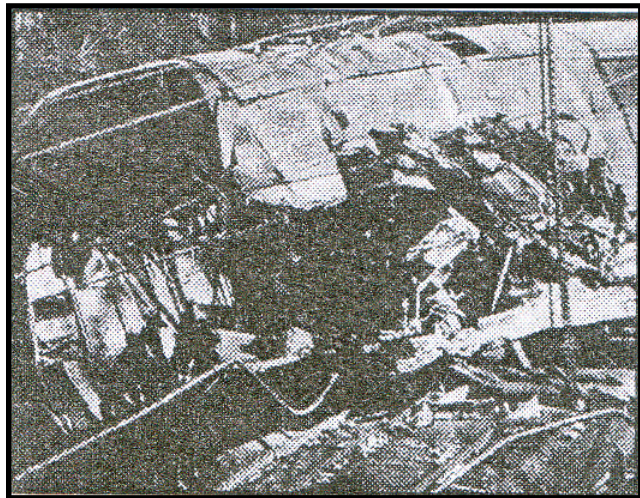


Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

MID DEC.2020 - D-DAY FOR DOO WITH NEW INTER-URBANS! URGENT STOP WORK MASS MEETING NEEDED FOR CAMPAIGN AGAINST DOO & WAGE FREEZE! NO MORE SECRET SELLOUT DEALS BY CLAASSENS!



Flashback to 1999 - Glenbrook Disaster: DOO major factor in Disaster! Cover-up by Media and Carr ALP Govt. Inquiry with involvement of Union Bosses.

Sydney Buses News;	NSW Railways News;
Memorandum of Betrayal;	Victorian Railway News;
'On The Cheap';	Fair Game Part 4;
Failure to Protect;	ICARE Rorts;

EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Coming New DOO Push

Some of the most explosive news in recent weeks was the discovery of a secret 'Memorandum of Understanding' from 2017 between the RTBU NSW Leadership and NSW Trains Management okaying DOO (Driver Only Operation) on the new interurban trains. (Check www.sparksweb.org for a copy. As the officials seem too frightened to put it up on the RTBU web site.) With the 'Facilitation' clause in NSW and Sydney Trains EBA's 2018, DOO will be facilitated to other train types. RTBU NSW State Secretary Alex Claassens has been flourishing consultation meeting attendance sheets about the MOU around, but no one recalls any meeting where the MOU was tabled, discussed and voted upon. Whilst the MOU is in breach of both Rail EBA's 2018 clauses and RTBU rules. The MOU should be considered illegal and non binding. Whilst moves are afoot to sack Alex Claassens as RTBU NSW Secretary over this treachery. (See article page 3.) Its urgent a mass stop working meeting is held on this issue and the NSW Public Sector Wage Freeze move which is likely Claassens will okay to discuss a campaign of action. An 'Unofficial Campaign Co-ordinating Committee' is likely to be required to be established. With D-Day likely in mid Dec. 2020, a likely management/union hierarchy strategy would be to have any industrial 'blue' in the January 2021 holiday period to ineffectually let off steam.

The introduction of DOO on the new trains is based on the myth of its safety. However DOO has been a major likely factor in the Glenbrook Disaster on 2/12/99. The media reports, Govt. Inquiry with the complicity of the union hierarchy, covered up the changed role of the guard on the stopped Indian Pacific to customer service, so detonators weren't put out potentially averting the collision. Claassens appears very quiet on this issue.

In this edition we are focusing again on the continuing COVID-19 Crisis and its ramifications for public transport workers. The union hierarchy response is continuing to be grossly inadequate on the issue. Particularly in regard to protective measures such as masks and pandemic leave for public transport workers affected by the virus. (See article page 5.)

Some of the most important news in Sydney Buses, is ever more attacks by Transit Systems bosses in Region 6, affecting taking recreational leave and extra pay due for Easter Saturday according to the current RTBU EBA. Whilst drivers are continuing to have to cope with many defective buses such as at Leichhardt Depot. Another important issue is the looming NSW Public Sector Wage Freeze and the lies the Berejiklian Govt. is using to justify the new attack. It makes a mockery of the whole 'Enterprise Bargaining' scam, where fake pay rises are exchanged for real conditions and wages cuts with the aid of smoke and mirrors performances by the union hierarchy, management, the Govt. and the corporate media. (See article page 15.) **Sparks welcomes contributions by transport workers. Please send to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW or via our web site www.sparksweb.org, Subscriptions are \$5 per year. Please make out postal notes to Rebel Worker. Sparks is published by Sydney Local of the Network for Democratic Unionism. web site: www.sparksweb.org**

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

New InterCity Fleet (NIF) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a memorandum of betrayal?

If it wasn't bad enough that the RTBU leadership has done nothing but lose members jobs, workplace rights pay and conditions over the last few EA negotiations. It has recently come to light that they even entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with management on the New InterCity Fleet (NIF), without the knowledge of most RTBU members.

Now that this memorandum of betrayal has come to light, through the efforts of Rank and File First members, the RTBU leadership is attempting to explain it all away as just a big misunderstanding, a lapse in members memories, a repressed memory. And to prove it, the RTBU leadership has put out various attendance sheets, they claim are evidence that members were shown the MOU and supported it. Only problem is, no one seems to remember seeing and/or supporting this MOU.

And what does this MOU seek to do?

Well, on the surface and at a casual glance, perhaps at a meeting somewhere, after a couple of beers, it might look like just another attempt to circumvent enterprise bargaining and eliminate jobs. No big deal right! Wrong!

When viewed in the cold light of day, the MOU is a memorandum of betrayal, a Trojan Horse designed to dismantle and weaken the Enterprise Agreement from within.

So even if the RTBU leadership did show it to members, as they claim, wouldn't that be promoting a document that seeks to work against the best interest of union members?

Wouldn't that be contrary to Objective 5 (a) of the rules of the union?

5 OBJECTS (a): "to uphold the rights of combination of labour, to maximise the amount of labour employed within the rail, tram and bus industry and to improve, protect and foster the best interests of its members"

And doesn't the MOU seek to violate the terms of the Agreement and enter into or attempt to enter into an agreement contrary to the provisions of an applicable Agreement?

If the union leadership did in fact meet with management, in early 2017, to agree to present the MOU to members at various meetings and solicit their support for the MOU, as they claim their signed attendance sheets prove, then they are in violation of union rule 15 (x)?

RULE 15 (x) "A member of the Union shall not: - violate or attempt to violate the terms of any applicable industrial Award or Agreement or enter into or attempt to enter into any agreement with any employer or an employee thereof contrary to the provisions of an applicable Award or Agreement;"

The answer to each question is of course YES!

Here are some obvious violations or attempts to the terms of the Enterprise Agreement:

First, it reinforces the concept of a “DEED”. That is exactly the method used to remove involuntary redundancy from the Enterprise Agreement and water it down under a separate deed.

Clause 2.1.3 states “improve the safety of staff”. How would staff safety be improved if guards are removed or given alternate roles?

The MOU outlines everyone’s rights under clause 3.6, then effectively takes it all away under clause 4.2.

Clause 5.2 totally removes the Union from any participation in decision making relating to DOO.

Clause 5.5 disguises the RTBU rights by implying it still has a say, but really only gives it the option to agree or support the changes. If it disagrees or does not support the changes, too bad, it doesn’t get a say.

Clause 6 also appears to take away bargaining power from the RTBU.

Clause 7 basically states that NSW Trains will, without consultation or agreement, make changes in regard to NIF and if the RTBU doesn’t like it, then they can raise a dispute through clause 8 of the EA.

Clause 7.5.4 isolates members and takes away collective bargaining power.

Clause 9 does not offer redundancy to guards where option 2 – Driver/Second Person is adopted, only if Option 3 – DOO is adopted.

10.1.2 appears to take the bargaining power away from rank and file members and leaves it in the hands of senior managers and senior Union Officials.

This reimagined idea of consultation is nothing more than simple advice of what management intend to do by dictation. This is a form of maladministration.

What is maladministration?

Here’s what the Fair Work Ombudsman has to say in quotation marks:

“While the word ‘maladministration’ is not used in the Ombudsman Act, it is a convenient word to describe the nature and scope of the general administrative review jurisdiction of the Ombudsman in relation to the NSW public sector.”

“The word ‘maladministration’ is used and defined in the Protected Disclosures Act 1994, which provides that for the purposes of that Act, conduct is of a kind that amounts to maladministration if it involves an action or inaction of a serious nature that is:

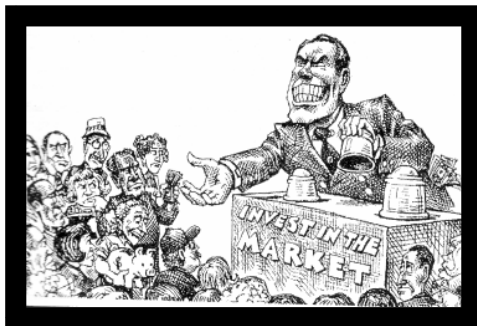
- (a)contrary to law, or
- (b)unreasonable, unjust, oppressive or improperly discriminatory, or
- (c)based wholly or partly on improper motives.’ (s 11)”

JUST GOOGLE:
SPARKS WEB SITE
FOR A COPY OF
THE MOU
www.sparksweb.org

The MOU is a blatant act of maladministration designed to circumvent and undermine the Enterprise Agreement. Unfortunately the actions and inactions of the union leadership, demonstrate that they are complicit in this memorandum of betrayal.

They are only putting up a façade of resistance, a smoke screen, just thick enough and long enough to keep the majority of members blissfully unaware of the harsh reality - privatisation and automation is baked into the cake and there's likely more MOU's. Both management and the union leadership have drunk from the same cup, it's like two sides of the same coin.

So, when you hear your colleagues moan and complain, in the meal room (if you still have one) why isn't the union doing anything about this? There can only be two possibilities. The union leadership are too stupid to see the writing on the wall and no one could be that stupid or they're in on it, like useful idiots.



There's no more time to indulge the useful idiots on either side, privatisation and automation is locked in!

The only way to stop it, the current union leadership must go and management needs to be brought to heel.

Rank and File First are running a campaign based on a petition which is circulating, that calls for a vote of no confidence in RTBU NSW Secretary Alex Claassens. Digitally sign the petition here: '<https://forms.gle/6NydMdUzda7eoAuz9>'. See PDF form of the petition attached to this bulletin. Return completed petitions at 'rankandfilefirst@outlook.com'.

Register for our emailing list and ask any questions by sending an email to 'rankandfilefirst@outlook.com'. Open organising meetings are to be conducted shortly. We aim to operate openly, democratically and transparently on our collective path forward to improve the lives of RTBU members.

Failure to Protect

by Crimson Coconut

Workers have been tragically let down during the COVID-19 Pandemic across the country. It's a reflection of the way workers on the front line essential services are viewed. Really they are expendable in the view of some people.

Suitable protective equipment for workers and commuters on Public Transport has been slow in coming. This is despite World Health Organisation guidelines released some time ago pointing out that P.P.E. such as masks could reduce transmission of the virus.

“WHO advises that governments should encourage the general public to wear masks where there is widespread transmission and physical distancing is difficult, such as on public transport, in shops or in other confined or crowded environments.”

They went on to say: “The use of a mask alone is insufficient to provide an adequate level of protection or source control, and other personal and community level measures should also be adopted to suppress transmission of respiratory viruses.”

Despite this widespread advice public transport workers are now only just being provided with face masks and other essential PPE. From what I can gather, in many States, including N.S.W., it is still a voluntary workplace practice where members of the workforce can acquire face masks if desired.

While the NSW Government has very little interest in protecting its workforce or commuters the Victorian Government has mandated the wearing of masks when out of your home. While the unions in Victoria were contemplating providing masks instead of pressuring employers, the Victorian Government finally mandated the requirement for all public transport workers to wear masks in the workplace and now has provided them. Commuters are also obliged to wear face masks on public transport.

Public Transport in Victoria is largely privatised and while we acknowledge that the Government there has a role in protecting its people, why is that the private operators of transport were not pressured into providing the P.P.E. and any other measures that protect the public and workers in the sector? Also why was there not a union campaign involving members to help force these private companies to provide the resources and procedures to protect the public and essential workers?

It is the employers obligation to provide safe workplaces and protect their staff after all. Once again they have been let off the hook by unions that never organised an effective workplace campaign to protect their members. Public pleading by the unions for the protection of their members was also late into the pandemic. Public transport workers are lucky to have dodged the early infections. This surely was simply a matter of luck.

In the U.K. 27 London bus drivers died from Corona virus before measures, such as barriers and mid bus boarding were instituted to protect bus drivers and the public. At least 44 public transport workers have died as a result of the virus so far there.

In the U.S. public transport workers were dying like flies. In New York alone 98 transit workers had died by May 1st this year. This figure may now be in the hundreds, if not thousands, as the virus has spread unchecked through communities. In some US States public transport was temporarily suspended, while in others the collection of fares was halted in an effort to curb the transmission of the virus. Other protective measures were employed such as boarding from the rear of buses and installing large plastic shields to protect bus drivers.

Public transport workers have been on the front lines of death around the world and have been sacrificed to the economic Gods to keep industry running and the profits flowing.

In N.S.W. mixed messages have been coming from the Government. In the beginning State employees were not supplied face masks or P.P.E. Although some were supplied in a haphaz-

ard way when employees insisted. Up until last week rail employees were told that if they wanted to wear face masks they would have to supply their own.

This week the situation has changed again with the Government supplying copious quantities of face masks and hand sanitiser to anyone that wants it. However there is no real policy in place and it's only an individual voluntary arrangement. This is unsatisfactory as those not protecting themselves pose a huge risk to those that realise the risks and have taken steps to protect themselves.

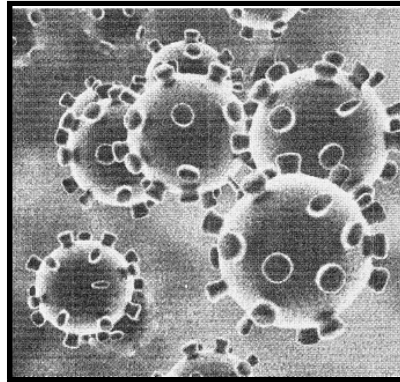
Unlike Victoria, where commuters compulsorily risk a heavy fine for not wearing masks on public transport, commuters in NSW are only encouraged by the Government to wear masks on the transport system. However once again it is a purely voluntary act. Consequently in N.S.W. there are some who are blase' about the threat and refuse to cover their faces.

On the 3rd August, David Shoebridge of the NSW Greens wrote a letter to the Transport Minister, Andrew Constance, urging the NSW Government to provide masks to Public Transport workers in a bid to protect them and to stop transmission of the virus. In the letter Shoebridge pointed out that the R.T.B.U. had made similar requests, but they seemed to be ignored. Maybe this is the reason the Government has now begun to supply its employees with masks and hand sanitisers.

The Union on the other hand did not take the issue of the safety of its members seriously enough to start a campaign in the workplace or to commence industrial action to protect them.

Similarly the resignation of NSW Unions Secretary, Mark Lennon, from the privatised Workers Compensation managing company, iCare, due to revelations of corruption and theft, shows where the union movement is at. As a Director of iCare and as a workers representative not a squeak came from Lennon into the public arena about the cronyism and nepotism within the organisation. It took investigations by journalists to expose this sordid scam ripping \$billions off injured workers in N.S.W..

There still remains the issue of "paid pandemic leave". Even the Victorian Premier, who is no friend of workers, has raised this issue, which is a Federal responsibility, to help curb the spread of infection. Low paid essential workers, such as those in public transport, who get sick or have to isolate for any reason will in all likelihood continue to work to put food on the table and continue to have a roof over their heads. The paid leave provisions are inadequate considering many people take months to overcome and recover from the virus. There should have been some discussion and campaigns in the public transport workplaces pressuring employers and the Government for a comprehensive paid pandemic leave program. The MOU around pandemic leave as it stands is cumbersome, unclear and far from generous.



We have seen from the response of the Unions and the Government that essential workers in the public transport sector are substantially overlooked when it comes to workers rights and their safety. The A.C.T.U. while paying lip service to worker protection and the matter of leave has also done little to organise workers through the unions, preferring instead to appear on national television or place a series of memes on social media to get their point across. Nothing is going to move for workers using these tactics.

In recent Enterprise Agreements precarious work such as casual and part-time work has become enshrined in public transport. Unions agreed to the move away from full time work, yet the peak union bodies such as the ACTU now warn about the consequences of insecure work. Insecure work is a reality now. Casual workers have no special paid leave beyond the allowances included in their hourly rate. Insecure work has become a threat to us all, it is a killer. Unions have such short memories and have pushed ahead with these “reforms” despite the protestations from many of their members.

Nothing is going to change in the short term. Only through democratic worker controlled structures in the workplace can we exert the pressure needed to provide dignity, safety and a voice. Unfortunately our elected officials have failed to organise an adequate response to the pandemic, to protect us or even listen to our concerns. What we need to do is make sure that our voices are heard loudly and forcefully by organising ourselves in a cohesive united force in our workplaces and our communities. Bigger challenges still lie ahead. We must face them together and overcome them as they arise.

Fair Game, Part 4. The Second Wave!

We always knew it was coming, the second wave. Because the talking heads in the media, the sell out politicians and the spineless order followers in the bureaucracy kept telling us the second wave was coming. We just didn't know how they'd set it in motion and hoped they wouldn't. But now the pieces fall into place!

The sell out in Queensland (a Labor hack) kept the border closed despite a High Court challenge, “advice” and the actual number of deaths were/are no worse than those from a seasonal flu. In fact, according to a number of sources this virus is simply another strain of the flu that didn't mutate naturally as flu viruses do every year but was engineered in a Chinese lab to give it “gain of function” as explained in the last edition of Fair Game.

And if you need proof, here's an article posted on 23 July 2020, by Thomas Duff for Daily Mail Australia and here's what Duff allegedly said. I say allegedly because the media is simply a propaganda machine that delivers pre-planned and carefully scripted disinformation, propaganda. The following is quoted directly from the Daily Mail article:

“The number of people dying from flu has drastically declined compared to last year thanks to corona virus restrictions keeping people socially distant.”

“The latest national statistics revealed deaths from the flu from January to June 2020 have dropped to just 36.”

“Over the same period in 2019, 430 people died from the flu.”

This is how dumb they think we are. They simply rebrand the flu and call it a new deadly virus and the propaganda media rollout the scripted spin to cause fear and confusion. And now they think we can't even work out that 2 plus 2 equals 4. They simply take the flu deaths and rebrand them as Covid-19 deaths and expect us to believe that instances of flu deaths have declined.

You can of course find even more evidence that Covid-19 numbers are being fabricated and inflated both for infections and deaths.

Back to this sell out in Queensland and why she was so confident in persisting with the boarder closure. Well it's pretty easy when you know the playbook. She knew the sell out in

Victoria was setting the scene for a second wave. This is all designed to generate and maintain fear in the minds of the public.

See all the while Andrews, kept various restrictions on the average Victorian and occupied the police with handing out outrageous fines for violations of the bogus and illegal restrictions, he was simultaneously

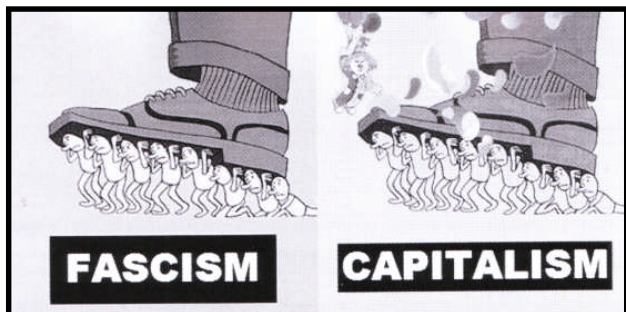
importing infected people into Victoria, with no one to police their quarantine.

Now it's all being passed off, in the propaganda media, as just simple bureaucratic incompetence and ineptitude (believable enough) and alleged failure to understand the rules. Because if one simply said "NO ENGLISH" then it's all okay they can go ahead and infect the whole bloody place. We couldn't possibly risk offending anyone, just because they didn't understand the rules, no, no, no, it's much, much easier to shut the whole place down and put people out of work, perhaps permanently. Oh yeah, sorry that's the plan, we're getting ahead of ourselves.

You may recall that in the last edition of Fair Game we gave you a definition of a false flag and here it is again:

False flag: "A false flag is when a group releases false information or carries out a fake terror attack to instil fear in people. However, the blame is put on another group or organisation to gain control over the masses and shift opinion"

In this case, the false information is that a new strain of the flu is presented as a completely new virus or "NOVEL" virus. In fact, a new strain of the flu is referred to as a "NOVEL FLU" and you will recall that both the government and media talking heads initially referred to it as the "NOVEL" virus and then suddenly it became COVID-19. The renaming or rebranding of the "NOVEL FLU" allowed them to rebrand the deaths, remembering that new strains of the flu occur every year and several hundred people die from it, every year in Australia and millions worldwide, mostly elderly and those with a pre-existing medical condition.



And what are the symptoms for a “NOVEL FLU”? Exactly the same as the symptoms for the bogus COVID-19.

How convenient, by simply rebranding the flu, the manipulators have been able to instil fear and gain control over the masses to shift their opinion of what a “new normal” might look like.

Are you getting it yet? No! It all seems too farfetched, you might say.

Take your mind back to when this thing first kicked off in March and suddenly “the news”, the propaganda media were telling you that people were hoarding toilet paper. Remember you and everybody that you knew was surprised that someone would hoard toilet paper, remember? Well here we are in the second wave and there’s no one hoarding toilet paper.

That’s because that was part of the initial psychological shock and your editor suggested the following:

“Psychological warfare uses fear to break down the psychological wellbeing of an opponent.....(Could the contrived and irrational hoarding of toilet paper be a sophisticated form of manipulative message that supports and reinforces the fear being whipped up by the media, ‘the news’).”

The initial shock is to prepare you to submit!!!

Submit to what or who, you may ask?

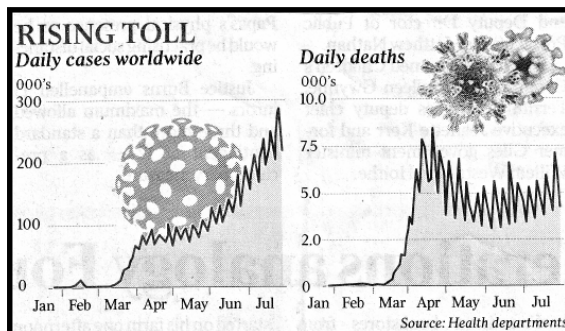
And the answer is simple, submit to being told what to do, what to say and what to think, because your overlords, your masters want you as an obedient slave who will follow orders and accept that you must lose any ideas that you may have had that you have any rights or freedoms.

In fact, your overlords, your masters have decided that you have become an infestation on what they consider their world, their planet.

Yes, your overlords, your masters tolerated you for a time because they needed you to build, run and man their factories but now, they have automated robotic factories oversea that they built with slaves. While their useful idiots in politics and the union leadership told utopian stories of social justice and a better world, a greater good, if you would only submit to having your factories and industries shut down and transferred to overseas.

Just a couple of minor technicalities they failed to mention, the huge profits they were making from using slave labour to produce goods overseas and weren’t being used for social justice and to build a better world. No, your overlords, your masters were building robotic automated factories and artificial intelligence (AI) that can run and surveil the whole world.

Your overlords, your masters don’t need you anymore, because they have a plan and you’re not in it!



Now the pieces fall into place!

The useful idiots in politics, the union leadership, “mockingbird” propaganda media play their part by creating hysteria and fear to force you to submit to wearing a mask. Not because it actually protects you from the alleged virus, no but as a symbol of your submission and any old rag will do.

The order followers in the bureaucracy will of course follow orders and fine you or imprison you or both if you challenge the narrative and don't comply.

The face mask is a sign that you have submitted and are ready for the next step!

Wake up, we're in a 21st century psychological, bio-weapon propaganda war and it's being waged against you!

The Game is not Fair! Don't believe the propaganda, educate yourself, ask yourself why do you need to wear a mask (any old rag) if it doesn't stop the virus? Why are flu numbers down in a flu season? If this alleged virus is no more deadly than the flu why are we shutting down the economy?

Lookout for the next addition of Fair Game where we expose more of the elite's plan and how the union leadership fits in.

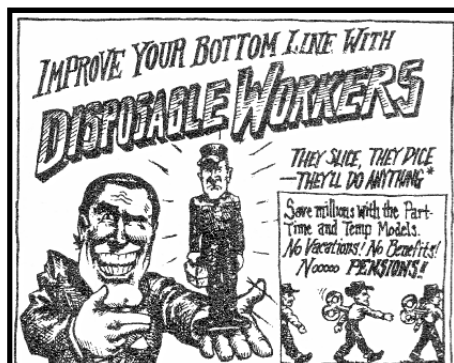
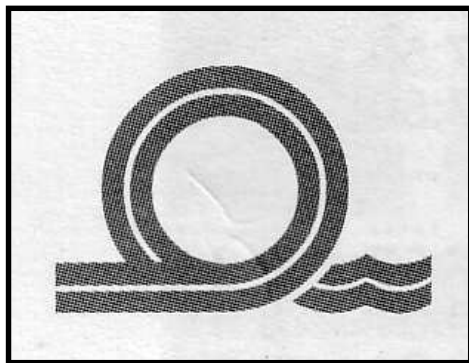
Elite: “a group or class of people seen as having the most power and influence in a society, especially on account of their wealth or privilege”. “Select group that is superior in terms of ability or qualities to the rest of a group or society”.

By a concerned reader Edited.

Democratic Unionism means grass roots controlled unionism, not control by officials. It also means that workers in one industry should be in one union so as to remove artificial divisions that can cause disunity. Such a union should be fully organised and controlled by the membership.

To achieve this we believe a union should be organised along the following lines:

1. That no person employed by the union should earn more than the average income of the membership.
2. The Spokespeople should have no executive power - all decisions should be made by the union membership in the course of mass meetings.
3. Spokespeople are only to act as delegates elected by the membership to carry out decisions made by the membership in mass meetings.
4. That a mechanism is instituted for the instant recall of spokespeople/delegates who break the above rules.
5. That all positions within the union be held on a limited tenure, the duration of which will be decided by the membership.
6. That a programme of decentralised decision-making be implemented within the union structure, so that we won't need full time officials.



‘On The Cheap’ A Fictional Account (Political Satire)

On the morning of Monday 16th March 2020, Alex Claassens NSW RTBU State Secretary was being driven to Transport for NSW Head Office, to attend a special top secret conference entitled ‘The Post COVID-19 Crisis: Transport Workers Wages and Conditions Fire Sale’ to be held in the conference room at 9am sharp. He roared along toward the venue often doing wheelies in his brand new luxury limo.

It had been a gift he received from money raised by union reps particularly from the Loco section with ambitions for room at the top. Even the ALP Godfathers and some of the bosses who appreciated his shadow boxing performances during EBA’s had pitched into the appeal. The chocolate wheels had whirled, raffles had been held and hats had gone around the depots and elsewhere. The rustle of brown paper envelopes being discretely handed under tables was heard. He was being rewarded for his years of professional union leadership, excellence in fabricating evidence of membership consultation meetings and ‘honesty’. They thought he deserved a bit of luxury, indulging and pampering. He loved that car more than his wife! He seemed married to it! His chauffeur was attired in the new official RTBU uniform modelled on an old style Australian diplomatic outfit which caught Alex’s fancy, with epaulets, gold braid, plumed hat and even a sword in a scabbard! As the chauffeur also had to moonlight as a body guard for Alex, given the leaking of the secret MOU (Memorandum Of Understanding) regarding the selling out of the train crews over DOO (Driver Only Operation) on the new interurban trains causing great anger in certain quarters. However, Loco reps were so impressed with his negotiating outcome with the MOU, they even wanted to reward him with a 20% pa rise! The NSW public sector pay freeze obviously won’t apply to Alex, if only he would reveal his current gross salary to them! The chauffeur job was financed from so called training fund monies provided discretely by Sydney and NSW Trains, and State Transit to the ‘union’. As Claassens arrived at the venue, his chauffeur opened his door, snapped to attention, smartly saluted and clicked his heels.

Next to arrive was David Babineau, NSW RTBU Bus Division Secretary. As a rookie in the position, he was not supplied with such a prestigious limo and chauffeur. He had to cope with

an old clapped out Morris Minnie Minor. On the way, it had flat tyres. Luckily however union reps from the depots in Transit Systems Region 6 and the STA were able to come to the aid of a kindly union official in distress. Poor old Babineau, whilst unable to find much energy to assist the grass roots to fight with direct action against the privatisation push. They put on harnesses which they had handy as they were supervising that day the trialling of a new Transit Systems Uber style Rickshaw service, to pull the vehicle. Whilst others got behind and pushed. Also inspired by visions of room at the top. Eventually they reached the venue.

Next to show up was TWU(Transport Workers Union) NSW Secretary Tony Sheldon, in a brand new Cadillac with chauffer, but not so gaudily and flamboyantly attired as the RTBU counterpart but strangely enough hugging a violin case where a Tommie gun lurked. The limo was equipped with CIA designed armour plating, necessary given the corrupt dictatorship which reigns in that organisation. The vehicle and antique weaponry was a gift from admirers in the US Teamsters' Union, the AFL-CIO-CIA and the 'Mob'.

Faceless Transport for NSW bureaucrats, CEO's of Sydney and NSW Trains, State Transit, Transit Systems and other private transport companies arrived via helicopter on the helipad on the roof. Avoiding the peak hour traffic gridlock which normal commuters face. Transport Minister Constance roared to the venue in the Departmental Lamborgini with NSW Police escort.

As the conference was beginning to warm up and Constance was preparing for his welcoming address, a bizarre and shocking incident occurred! Tony Sheldon waving the new TWU flag emblazoned with the slogan "TWU Driving Private Enterprise to make Australia Great!" started brazenly touting for business amongst the assembled corporate heavy weights. He commenced handing out brochures listing various cuts to workers wages and conditions, his 'union' could achieve with the 'franchising' of State Transit and the NSW Railways. It would even accommodate an indefinite pay freeze and would achieve an outcome, a certain, nameless 'rival union' could never obtain.

As he was chatting up the big bosses, suddenly all hell broke loose. Alex 'the big fellah' from the RTBU, with a murderous glare in his eyes, burst into 'direct action' disregarding all his favourite little sayings about "always obeying the law of land" and "its legally binding! My hands are tied! You wouldn't expect me to do anything illegal!" charged Sheldon. Head butting, tackling and savagely biting him on the ear. Then ripping up Sheldon's flyers and trampling on the TWU flag. Sheldon's immaculate \$5,000 silk suit lovingly embroidered in gold thread by his dear wife with the TWU logo was trashed! Splattered in blood and gore! Babineau from the RTBU Bus Division also displaying an uncharacteristic 'direct action' approach veering sharply from his normal 'legalistic' stance, rushed over with a broken beer bottle and was about to brutally 'finish off' a prone Sheldon, when Minister Constance raced from the rostrum and frantically intervened to quell the fracas.

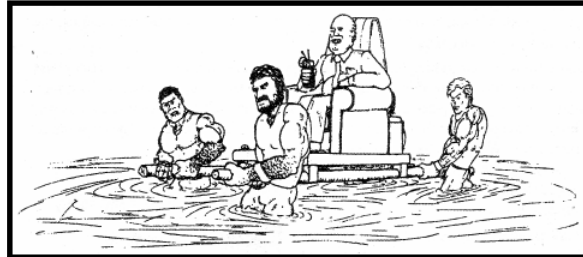
There was a stunned silence in the room! A wave of tremendous consternation and shock swept the assorted bosses over the RTBU officials' 'wild man' performance. They were scratching their heads. They couldn't believe what they had just seen had actually happened! They had thought Claassens and Babineau couldn't hurt a fly. They did note that on occasion Alex did display fake industrial muscles like with Rail EBA 2018. However in backroom ne-

gotiations they were like big pussy cats, but they did like rich cream in their saucers. Sheldon was hurriedly patched up.

The conference convened with Constance welcoming the attendees and starting a spiel in 'rain maker mode' about how the Post COVID crisis was a great opportunity to increase productivity and cut costs. He dazzled and thrilled his audience with graphs showing how an array of measures such as a permanent public sector wage freeze and cuts to various allowances such as for bendi shifts and overtime penalty rates would help boost the NSW State of Business thus bouncing it out of recession. Gold dust would rain down into corporate coffers.

Suddenly Claassens, the spoilt sport, rose from his chair and loudly interjected. He complained that while there was room for a temporary wage freeze and cuts, particularly in the case of inter-urban and later on metro train guards which he conceded were grossly overpaid. He self righteously ranted "they have been pampered for far too long and with the pretext of a transfer to a customer service role, merit a pay cut." Triumphantlly flashing the secret MOU document and then the 'consultation' meeting attendance forms. Quipping to the bosses, "it's amazing, after a few beers you can get those losers to sign off on anything!" He went on and stated there still needed to be the fake pay rises, which only barely met inflation as part of EBA smoke and mirrors. Whilst an allowance which provides 'thirty pieces of silver' was necessary to bribe drivers for DOO in the railways. He chortled about his great work with Rail EBA 2018 and how he was able to slip the 'Facilitation' and 'Transmission of Business' clauses in and divert grass roots attention to relatively minor nasties and a slight improvement above the 2 1/2% p.a. pay rise cap, with the aid of the corporate media. He was even able to con 'those losers' into voting, for the EBA without even seeing the document! What if 'a certain under-

ground magazine' did a critique with a flyer? The AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) could secrete 'sleight of hand' assuring a 'Yes' vote. He was now masterminding another parliamentary focused campaign to divert grass roots attention away from direct action to fight DOO with the new interurban trains. "It may look clunky and old hat now," he crowed, "but look at our 'Save Our Buses' campaign in regard to STA Region 6 which led the grass roots down a blind parliamentary alley. We have duplicated that in the Eastern Suburbs and no one has noticed yet."



Some days following the conference, Alex's limo was 'accidently' side swiped by Tony's Cadillac and had to be written off. Apparently bygones weren't bygones. However, Alex noticed (see advert.) a more prestigious, vintage vehicle which Loco reps could power to secret weekly meetings with Minister Constance.

Tony Sheldon, who had recovered somewhat after his 'direct action' encounter with fellow 'unionist' Claassens, suddenly piped up. He denounced Claassens for being out of date and

'too 20th Century' pointing to the RTBU's so called anti-Privatisation campaign regarding the remaining rump of the STA. Failing to notice its tacky lame duck character. His 'union' was ready to power drive privatisation. The sooner the selling off, the better! He flashed a copy of the latest edition of the TWU journal with relevant headlines. His 'union' also saw no further need for pay rises for those 'losers' on the job. In the interests of kick starting the NSW economy, his 'union' would also help trim back recreation and sick leave. Sheldon received wild applause from the bosses.

After the conference ended, all the attendees rushed to the pub. By chance they ran into Sally McManus ACTU Secretary who joined them. They were soon all watching a sizzling stripper performance in a cloud of smoke and mirrors. It was reminiscent of the now 'prehistoric' enterprise bargaining techniques. Suddenly 'out of the blue' Sally joined the show giving it a startling ultra modern new swing. She started outrageous raunchy lap dancing with the bosses! Singing provocatively, "hey big spender, spend some time with me, and you can have everything!" After the performance, handily she was able to mediate between Claassens and Sheldon, getting them to kiss and makeup. After a few beers, they were all slapping themselves on the back singing "We are all in this together!"

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

Sydney Buses News

Sparks: What's the latest at the depot?

Burwood Driver: The most significant development has been the impact of the COVID-19 Crisis. A handful of drivers over 70 at the depot have been persuaded by management to take leave and time off the job temporarily due to the virus. Whilst according to medical experts, those likely to be affected are also those with such pre-existing problems as heart and lung problems. However management is not taking any such action with them. At the depot, the bosses are now employing cleaners every day to disinfect buses. They mainly focus their cleaning during the period 10am to 2.30 pm when they can get to most buses. Initially we were obliged to take only 12 passengers on our buses due to Govt's social distancing requirements. Subsequently with the relaxing of restrictions, the number has been increased to 24. When we reached that number of passengers we were supposed to put up the 'set down only' sign. At important stops in the city such as at Railway Square, the Govt. has been employing monitors to check buses are meeting the social distancing requirements. The requirements have created new difficulties for us in our work.

In early June the bosses commenced installing screens near the driver's cabin to help shield us against the COVID-19 spread. However by the time all the buses at the depot have the screens the virus outbreak looks to be over.

Sparks: What is the latest with Transit Systems management?

BD: There has been some dramatic news. The TS bosses have announced that they will not negotiate a new enterprise agreement for ex-STA drivers at the depot. The union is approaching the Fair Work Australia Court to compel TS management to commence negotiations over a new enterprise agreement for these drivers.

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What are your thoughts on the Berejiklian Govt. push for a NSW public sector wage freeze?

Waverley Busie: With this push of the BeraBura Govt. its breaching the current enterprise agreement which is a type of contract. As part of the EBA we are supposed to get 2½% pa wage increase. Now the Govt. claims it needs to use this money to provide for \$ 3 Billion over 5 years for infrastructure developments to provide employment to overcome the recession precipitated by the COVID-19 Crisis. As the Govt. claims to be broke, despite raking in ½ \$Trillion in revenue from stamp duty on construction/housing developments. As part of the Govt's privatisation agenda it will sell off this infrastructure such as tollways and freeways (e.g. the M6 and M7) to its Corporate mates to recoup it's expenditure. It has already sold off the Land Titles Office for \$2 Billion. Meanwhile the cost of the BeraBura's 'white elephant' Light Rail extensions in the Eastern Suburbs have ballooned from \$1.4 Billion to \$3.2 Billion. I've travelled on the Light Rail and noticed it's poorly patronised probably due to its slowness, with most commuters favouring buses which are much more rapid. A better approach to speed up the service could involve only one set of carriages rather than the current two sets. An extra 'white elephant' is the Light Rail extensions in Parramatta. I believe this expenditure will never be recovered. The reality is that the State Govt. has an endless pipeline of money, more money than they can dream about, but they won't pay workers the pay rise they are supposedly entitled to legally. Showing how arrogant they are, the BeraBura Govt. has recently granted a \$17,000 pa pay rise to Damien Tudehope Minister for Finance and Small Business using the excuse of his promotion in the Govt. Whilst recently Mick Fuller NSW Police Commissioner was granted a \$87,000 pa pay rise. What an insult!

Sparks: What is the situation in the STA?

WB: The bosses are continuing to push off the job the long term drivers who have built up various entitlements such as long service leave, holiday pay and sick leave and replace them with the new drivers who lack these entitlements. This will encourage private operators to takeover. Under the Liberals the STA has been facing funding cutbacks like all other Govt. Departments over the last 8 to 9 years. This has led to the STA's unwillingness to spend adequate money on training new drivers. I have witnessed on a regular basis a good portion of new drivers are forcing their buses to keep track with the timetable. These drivers are pushing their luck blocking intersections, running red lights and ignoring Stop and Turn Right signs so as to stay on time. On Monday 27th July there was a major bus accident involving the collision of two buses at High Street near UNSW in Kensington. From TV coverage one of the buses looked like it could have run a red light causing the mayhem. It also shows the new drivers have a poorer standard of training and their bad driving habits are not being picked up and corrected. I believe the fault lies in driver training. There is no proper follow up of drivers after training school. Meanwhile many older driver assessors have taken redundancy and left the job. So there is no adequate facility. In the past a driver who had a series of accidents would be sent to retraining to fix up their driving problems. Now drivers with a series of accidents often aren't around on the job long. It's easy for the STA to get new drivers and they don't need good drivers.

Latest news is that a snag has occurred with the BeraBura Govt. plans to flog off the Eastern Suburbs Depots including Waverley, Pt. Botany, Randwick and the Light Rail as a package early next year, under the facade of helping boost the NSW economy out of the COVID-19 outbreak initiated recession. We are in Limbo. The private operator who was eyeing us off has got cold feet due to considering the price demanded by the Govt. to be too high. This is despite the Govt. providing a subsidy for operating the services. The company is likely waiting until the price is reduced significantly before making their purchase. It seems other depots will be first off the mark for the carve-up. I heard in late June an add on 2KY by Unions NSW opposing STA privatisation focusing on the issue of drivers losing pay and conditions under the new private operators. A likely counter-tactic of any new operator will be the 'frog in hot water' technique. Where rather than placing the frog straight into boiling water, the frog is placed in water which is gradually heated up. With this approach wages and conditions will be gradually reduced such as through the phased elimination of the bendi shift allowance from different shifts. However there is likely to be jobs for the boys with STA bosses gaining jobs with the new operator as consultants. As occurred with former CEO Peter Rowley and Jamie Sinclair in Transit Systems when it took over STA Region 6. Other news is that we now have a new CEO Daniela Fontana. Why change CEO? Is somebody standing aside to re-emerge like Rowley or Sinclair did in the 'private sector' after a brief interlude? Why do they bother? We all know they jump ship for bigger pay packets!

Sparks: What is the situation at the depot?

WB: COVID-19 has changed the workplace, with the damper put on remaining social activities such as sporting and athletics clubs. With many of our buses not going through the City since the tramway extensions, there is much less variety in our jobs. On Monday 27th July the bosses threw a party to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Waverley as a bus depot. It was formerly a tram depot. Managers addressed a staff meeting and provided 2 cakes decorated with '60' and coffee. The celebration seemed quite melancholy and bizarre with the dark clouds of privatisation looming after this milestone of Govt. operated public buses. It's a poor outlook for drivers and commuters with privatisation. It will not work! Even though Madame Lash (former Depot Mistress) has departed the scene.

Sparks: What are your impressions of the police in NSW?

WB: On a recent ABC Radio program, there was mention that in the USA, when Clinton was President, the police were issued with excess military hardware. Here in Sydney under successive Administrations the police have become ever more militarised. However many of the police are not trained to use the arms. In NSW the Police Union has been heavily backing a push to militarise the NSW police. The riot squads are now dressed in black to look more scary to intimidate people, heavily armed and armoured. At the time of the initial clamp down over the COVID-19 outbreak, there was even a report of the police driving an armoured personnel carrier on Gardeners Road Kingsford in the Eastern Suburbs. Why is there a need for this weaponry when there has been a decline in the number of crimes? As with CCTV's and other sophisticated technologies it's much easier these days for police to track people down over illegal activity. Why is the BeraBura Govt. constantly building more prisons?

Sparks: What is other news?

WB: Some of the most explosive has been the massive rorts in NSW Workers Compensation Commission ICARE exposed in a 4 Corners TV program on Monday 27th July I watched. ICARE was created by the Lib. Govt. in 2015 as a so-called reform. However, the ICARE bosses have been caught ripping off those claiming workers comp on a massive scale to boost their huge salaries. Huge bonuses have also been throw-in for them. The top 7 executives get salaries of \$660,000 and another 45 executives get around \$300,000 pa. Interestingly President of the NSW ALP Mark Lennon was on the ICARE Board and recently resigned over the scandal. Many Workers Comp claimants have experienced delays in payment, paid less than their correct entitlements amounting to an \$80 million underpayment which has funded ICARE bosses huge salaries and bonuses according to a Herald report. Whilst many workers were forced back to work after 3 years whilst still unfit. They were put under considerable stress through coercion and harassment by Allianz to drop their claim. Insurance giants like Allianz act on behalf of ICARE to gain financial incentives and meet targets. Members of the NSW Parliament Upper House from the Greens such as David Shoebridge and ALP who prior to becoming politicians were barristers have stated they noticed aspects of the scam in ICARE handling Workers Comp cases. This scandal follows others such as involving the Banks and Age Care facilities which have resulted in Royal Commissions. WARNING: If you consider you were underpaid or forced back to work whilst still unfit whilst on compo, don't hesitate to get legal advice. Now the Libs are saying ICARE is \$850 Mill. in the red. It goes to show how the Libs so-called 'small government' reforms can cause mayhem.

There was a report on the TV in early July that new double-decker trains made in China have been off-loaded from a ship in Sydney. Why not made in Australia? On another issue the main reason for the BeraBar Govt. backing down on moving all of the Power House museum from Ultimo, is that a green ban by building workers has been imposed on demolition of two stately colonial era houses in Parramatta where it was to be relocated. It shows people and unionists are starting to unite and standing up against the BeraBar Govt. and slowly winning.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What's the latest at the depot?

Leichhardt Driver: Some of the most important developments has been talk of the introduction of 40 of the new buses to the depot. As of late May, 4 only joined the depot fleet. With the COVID 19 crisis restrictions there was an associated decline in traffic reduced commuters on buses. As running times had not changed there has been little late running on various runs. As a result I have noticed a lack of overtime. However the 504 remains the worst in regard to running times despite few commuters catching it. I noticed in May-June a depletion of bendi shifts on the weekends. This development seems related to a lack of buses at the depot and the Govt's plans to cut such routes as the M50 to create more commuters for the Light Rail extensions in the Eastern Suburbs. These plans were suspended with the COVID 19 Crisis. In the depot building the roster clerks have now been moved to the duty officer's office causing a spreading out of staff.

Sparks: What are of other news?

LD1: The battle between the RTBU and TWU for our control is continuing. Latest development was the success of the TWU winning coverage in the Industrial Court. Now the RTBU is

fighting back and appealing the decision. In the STA, the bosses are paying uncapped special leave for those stood down due to the COVID 19 crisis.

Sparks: What are latest developments with management?

Leichhardt Driver2: They are introducing 10 new regulations in early August which focus particularly on Drug and Alcohol issues. Whilst from 3/8/20 new restrictions associated with the COVID-19 outbreak are being introduced particularly affecting access to the depot from the parking lot. The bosses have been on the offensive on a range of issues which our RTBU rep has been assisting us to successfully resist. In the case of drivers with empty buses one stop before the terminuses at Martin Place and Lilyfield, who were not going to stop at the terminus, were being called into the office over the issue. Following action by our union rep, the bosses have backed down. Another attack which greatly concerned many of us, is the bosses demanding that we take our recreational leave in 2 and 3 weeks allotments, rather than as the full 5 weeks block. Following union action, they backed down so we can take the full 5 weeks if we want. The Union Rep has also uncovered the underpayment of drivers in Region 3 who are TWU members. The bosses were only paying them \$4 a day allowance for bendi shifts when according to their EBA it should be at least \$11 a day. TWU officials did nothing on this issue for their members.

Sparks: What is other news?

LD2: We are getting a number of new buses into the fleet, to replace the older buses. Whilst the RTBU union hierarchy doesn't seem to be getting anywhere regarding the bosses refusal to pay the extra pay for Easter Saturday which we are due to according to a clause in our EBA. It's gone to the Fair Work Court and taken 12 months now, still the bosses are refusing to pay this money we are due.

Sparks: How are you finding the job at the depot?

Leichhardt Driver3: Despite some new buses joining the depot, we are still being hard hit by the large number of old defective buses. I'm tired of having to go up hills at only 5 kph in these buses.

Vic. Rail News

In this issue of Sparks we will discuss the Corona Virus as regards to V-Line plus other issues. Once again Drivers, Conductors and Station Staff will discuss these issues. As in previous issues, names have been changed.

Sparks: What is the current situation in Victoria regarding Public Transport?

Sheona: At the moment V/Line, Metro Trains and Bus Services, we are running normal services.

Rastus: Due to the Corona Virus restrictions trains are running almost empty. Victoria is in Stage Three lockdown.

Sparks: What is functioning?

Roscoe: Essential services, the construction industry and supermarkets are operating as normal.

Clarence: There is talk of reducing Tram, Train and Bus services on weekdays to a Saturday service but the problem is that trams and trains will operate from normal starting times but the majority of bus services commence two hours later on a Saturday. How would workers on connecting services in outer suburbs get to work? Less trains would mean less workers to operate the service.

Forsyth: V/line trains are operating with only a driver and a conductor. Due to distancing regulations no tickets are checked and Conductors are only to assist passengers. All catering services have been suspended until the restrictions are eased. Any passengers who are travelling on V/Line trains are required to keep a safe distance.

Sparks: What has happened to the catering staff?

Jethro: The Conductors and Catering Staff have been redeployed in Customer Service Duties observing the distance regulations.

Moose: Employees who are over 70 years old have been sent on Annual Leave for their safety. We have been informed that they have been given Special Leave. We are of the opinion that when this Special Leave runs out they should be allowed to use their Sick Leave.

Archie: Due to the restrictions V/Line connecting Bus Services running into South Australia have been suspended. During the emergency, the Bendigo-Adelaide Daylight service terminates at Lillimur. Warrnambool Mount Gambier service at Dartmoor, Ballarat Mount Gambier service at Casterton and the Albury-Adelaide Service at Murrayville.

Sparks: What's the situation with the Overland?

Ichabod: Great Southern Railways services were to cease running the Overland from March 31. At the last moment it was given a three month reprieve. Since 2001 the train has been operating on a Government Subsidy but since 2018 the Government of South Australia has not paid and only Victoria is subsidizing the train. On March 23rd it was announced the Overland as well as the Ghan and the Indian Pacific were suspended until the end of May. I doubt whether the Overland will return.

Sparks: Has there been stand downs amongst V/Line operations staff?

Sheona: No but some Head Office and Supervisory staff are working from home.

Rastus: What is distressing is despite the various Government assistance packages from both the Federal and State Govts, employees in Hospitality and Small and Large Business have been stood down and forced onto job seeking allowances.

Roscoe: Drivers from both V/Line and Metro Trains have noticed various food outlets at stations around Melbourne have closed down. In fact when stage two lockdowns were introduced one big outlet who had the franchise just shut down. Some of the employees who worked for this outlet were students and they cannot claim assistance.

Sheona: Sadly some employers will use the Corona virus shutdown as an excuse to restructure their business and many employees will lose their jobs. This will happen in the Airline Industry. Jethro: The sad part of these stand downs is the casualisation of the workforce. Listening to the radio some people have been working four casual jobs just to survive. Some these people have been stood down and cannot claim any assistance package.

Roscoe: The Corona virus has alerted the public to the casualisation of the workforce, the run-down of Australian industry.

Rastus: When things return to normal we can only hope this situation changes.

Sparks: What is happening with the V/Line EBA?

Moose: Nothing. Industrial action was to have taken place during March and April. The Government appointed a Mediator to try and work out a solution. He was a former official with the AMWU.

Forsyth: Due to Corona virus restrictions industrial action has been suspended. If no solution is reached it will resume once the emergency is over.

Rastus: The EBA with both Metro Trains and Yarra Trams has been settled.

Archie: You can see how threatening to stop work during the Grand Prix can force a resolution.

Roscoe: The situation at Metro Trains is that a postal ballot has been held and the result has been challenged due to only 51% voting to accept the EBA. Fair Work Australia may hold another ballot.

Rastus: V/Line industrial action as reported in the last issue has been on a line by line basis over a period of time. For example Traralgon stops work one day and Geelong the next.

Forsyth: V/Line replaces the trains on the corridor with buses on the day of the stoppage.

Midge: What makes us angry is that on one corridor during the 24 hour stoppage was the number of station staff who worked.

Archie: We have one word we call these people SCABS.

Sparks: How did this happen?

Forsyth: These people refused to join the union. The union delegates have left forms for them to fill out but nothing was returned.

Jethro: When EBA negotiations commence V/Line informs these individuals that the RTBU will be conducting negotiations and if they have any input contact V-Line.

Rastus: These people refuse to join the union. The main reason for not joining is that they think they will obtain promotion to a management position. It may happen to only a few, the others are being used. When negotiations are concluded they take the benefits.

Roscoe: V/Line management can get a cluster of non unionists to sign V/Line's EBA with reduced conditions. The V/Line can go to Fair Work, get the EBA passed and force it on to other employees or lead to a lockout when the employees refuse to accept the EBA.

Archie: This happened at CUB in 2014 with minimum conditions. The membership in the Eastern states would not accept the EBA and it resulted in a lockout of union employees which lasted for ten months.

Rastus: The dispute was settled with the help of other unions maintaining a strong picket line. CUB was also acquired by new owners who wanted the dispute settled. As a result the workers at CUB kept their existing conditions. (NSW-Sparks Editorial Comment: According to some info on the return to work deal, there was an obvious victory for the bosses in this dis-

pute. In regard to media reports and a joint AMWU-ETU statement as part of the return to work the union bosses agreed to measures which would mean the imposing of a new wave of speed ups in the workers' jobs to screw more productivity. The union bosses and Fair Work have refused to reveal full details of the new EBA unless a FOI request is made. Indicating there have been cut backs to workers conditions which the union bosses and Fair Work want to hide. Otherwise, why all the secrecy?)

Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. Workers in the rail industry have been fortunate there have been no stand downs. Once this emergency has been lifted one can only hope that catering services are restored and management does not try to impose their own EBA.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say we regard these non unionists as parasites who take the benefits the unions have fought for over the years and contributed nothing. We have a final word for them, SCABS.

In the last issue of Sparks brief mention was made about Victorian employees losing jobs on the XPT between Albury and Melbourne to State Rail. In this issue Drivers, Conductors and Station Staff will discuss these issues. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.

Rastus and Roscoe: Before we discuss these issues we at Sparks in Victoria offer our condolences to the families of the Driver and Pilot man who lost their lives in the derailment of the XPT at Wallan.

Sparks: When did the issue of Corridor Management of Interstate Trains raise its head?

Archie: It was first years ago in October 1990 that rumours started being circulated that Victoria was to hand over Country Trains to Australian National Railways.

Rastus: We Drivers heard the same rumour but it was later found out that a new organisation was to be established to operate Interstate Freight Trains. This was to evolve into the National Rail organisation.

Forsyth: The rumour of ANR absorbing V/Line Country services was later found to be incorrect.

Clarence: As the Interstate Trains were lost 26 years ago we will introduce you to an employee who will tell you what happened.

Benson: I worked at V/Line as a Conductor but I now work as a Driver for one of the Freight Companies.

Roscoe: In November 1990 the Victorian Government announced that they would purchase an XPT set and have the running of the service on the Sydney Melbourne rail corridor.

Benson: V/Line staff thought they would operate the train between Albury and Melbourne but sadly the Inter-capital Daylight was terminated in August 1991 with a loss of jobs in both Melbourne and Wodonga and Catering staff no longer worked to Junee. Albury became the changeover Station.

Archie: In 1990 a new business unit of State Rail called Country Link was established. It was this organisation who terminated the Daylight as NSW controlled two thirds of the Corridor.

Benson: In 1991 a number of presentation sessions were held and in September 1992, State Rail dropped a bombshell. They informed the V/Line delegates that the train was to be operated from Sydney with staff working to Melbourne from Sydney. On having this information the Union was notified and a meeting of both Operations Staff and Catering Staff was held.

Clarence: It was at this meeting members were informed that the Victorian Government had told V/Line management that V/Line was to withdraw from the operation of Interstate Trains.

Benson: The meeting was informed that ANR was to assume control of the Indian Pacific from Perth to Sydney with Adelaide being the Crew base. The Overland was to be operated by ANR from Adelaide to Melbourne with the crew being based at Adelaide and State Rail was to operate the Sydney-Melbourne Corridor.

Rastus: At this stage the Locomotive Division was not affected.

Benson: The Victorian Branch of the ARU(Australian Railways Union later to merge with other 'unions' to form the PTU and then RTBU) informed the meeting that the first they heard of Corridor Management was when Union Delegates from Wodonga and Melbourne told them of State Rail plans. The NSW Branch of the ARU did not inform the Victorian Branch.

Forsyth: It would not have happened at the worst time. A State Election was held with the Liberals winning the election in October 1992. The loss of the Interstate Trains was confirmed in a Transport Report Document issued in January 1993.

Sparks: When were the changes to be implemented?

Clarence: State Rail was to take over operation of the XPT in November 1993 when the XPT came online. ANR was to take over the operation of the Overland once the Adelaide to Melbourne line was converted to Standard Gauge.

Benson: In July 1993 a stop work meeting was held before the Sydney Express departed over the future of the employees who worked the train. The train departed an hour late. A second stop work meeting was to be held but management found out. Buses were substituted and the train was despatched to Sydney as empty cars. Media outlets were notified that V/Line no longer operated the train.

Sparks: What happened?

Rastus: The train was shunted into a siding at Wodonga and would not move until negotiations were held.

Benson: As a result of action by the Signalling grades V/Line still operated.

Roscoe: In November 1993 the XPT commenced operation. V/Line drivers operated the train to Junee with State Rail drivers sharing the operation. V/Line operated one third of the roster.

Benson: Because no agreement had been signed over State Rail operating the Corridor Staff, V/Line had to have a crew to operate the XPT from Albury to Melbourne. The V/Line staff were trained on the Sydney to Grafton portion of the Brisbane XPT.

Archie: In March 1994 multi-skilling was introduced into V/Line. Conductors were trained in Catering Duties and Catering Staff were trained as Conductors.

Benson: From July 1 State Rail decided to take control of the Sydney Melbourne Corridor with V/Line still staffing the train from Albury to Melbourne.

Sparks: When did State Rail Staff take over operation of the XPT.

Benson: The Arbitration Commission became involved and recommended that Albury remained open as a Depot. Staff displaced at Wodonga who worked the XPT transferred to CountryLink with service seniority from the day they commenced employment with the Victorian Railways. Employees from Melbourne who were displaced could transfer on the same conditions but had to transfer to Sydney. State Rail operated the train from October 1994.

Sparks: What happened with the Overland?

Benson: The Arbitration Commission wanted the matter settled. As a result of negotiations ANR assumed control of the Corridor in December 1994.

Sparks: What happened to the Employees who worked these trains?

Jethro: Thirty two positions were lost as a result of these changes. The transfers to the other operators only applied to staff who worked these trains. A number of employees moved to ANR. Only one employee based in Melbourne transferred to CountryLink. The other employees were offered Re-Deployment in other sections of the then RTC. Sadly a large number of employees decided to take redundancy packages. Some employees were absorbed into V/Line.

Archie: At this time there were also cuts in other parts of the Rail Industry in Victoria. A large number of employees have not forgotten what happened during the Kennett years.

Benson: I transferred to ANR and was made redundant when ANR was privatised in 1998. I eventually obtained employment with a Freight Operator where I now drive interstate Freight Trains.

Sparks: When were drivers removed from the XPT and the Overland?

Rastus: V/Line drivers were removed from the Overland in November 1997 when ANR was privatised as National Rail assumed control.

Roscoe: In 2012 or 2013, the Victorian Government sold the XPT to State Rail. We have heard rumours it was sold for a token price. As a result of this sale V/Line drivers no longer work the train.

Archie: The trains have been lost for twenty six years. For years there was ill feeling between V/Line staff and CountryLink staff. This has now mellowed. The V/Line staff who transferred to CountryLink at Albury have now retired. The staff transferred to ANR have lost contact. One of the staff members after ANR was privatised did return to V/Line years later as a Conductor.

Sparks: In concluding the then NSW Branch of the ARU has a lot to answer for not informing the National Branch what was happening in 1991 and 1992. As for the Union Delegate at CountryLink, he should have informed the Victorian Branch what was going on. The NSW Branch should hang their heads in shame.

What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic