

Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**RAIL, BUS & TRAM: STRIKE WHEN THE
IRON IS HOT! NOT IN THE BOSSES'
DOWN TIME IN COVID & HOLIDAYS!
TIME TO STEP UP THE 'REAL'
DEMANDS!**



Tele 22/5/21 TWU talk of strike in privatised STA. Here's the bosses' decoy. Expect more of the same!

N.S.W. Railway News p.3 ; Sydney Buses News p.14; Vic. Rail News p.20; Concrete & Stealing p.8; Rail EBA Charade p. 3;

Unbelievable! Post Lock Down Free Union Loco Div. Booze Up! P.9

EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

'FAILED RAIL EBA CAMPAIGN'

The most important news in the NSW Railways in recent months has been the RTBU's 'set up to fail' Sydney Trains and NSW Trains EBA (Enterprise Bargain Agreement) campaign. The union hierarchy's claim for 3.5% pa wage rises would certainly not meet the rate of inflation and would involve cost saving in the organisations /trade off's of conditions for the rise above 2.5% pa. Associated with the NSW Labour Expenses Cap imposed by the NSW ALP Govt. back in 2008 and the RTBU officials 'legalistic' approach. Likely trade off's are increased flexibility for management in rostering involving removal of limits on weekend work, night shifts and minimum lengths of shifts. Another key demand of management is the introduction of Driver Only Operation (DOO) with the New Interurban Fleet (NIF). For many years management, the Govt. and the union hierarchy have conspired to introduce DOO. Most significant was the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) on DOO on the NIF way back in early 2017. It was only uncovered by militants back in 2020. A copy is on our web site www.sparksworld.org As the RTBU officials are too frightened to put it up on their web sites. The MOU would have over ridden EBA 2014. However the union bosses had cold feet due to raised expectations of drivers and backed off. Direct action involving a wildcat strike by interurban drivers in Nov. 2020 also compelled management and the union officials to back off with a renewed DOO/NIF push. The introduction of DOO on the new trains would open the door to sacking the guards later down the track after transfer to a customer service type role and then 'facilitated' to metro trains.

Outrageously the RTBU officials conducted the EBA industrial campaign during the COVID-19 lock down, when 40% of rail staff were stood down and industrial action such as the 4 hour off peak rail strike on 28/9/21 would have minimal industrial impact. The lock down restrictions provided a pretext for the officials to not hold a mass meeting during the strike and head off any push by militants for serious action. A 'virtual picket' via zoom was held during the strike. The motion passed during the cyber meeting provided for no further plans for industrial action. Some steam stemming from grass roots disgruntlement was released ineffectually in the bosses' 'down time'. With the end of the lock down industrial action had to be called off by the RTBU officials and the the big sell out back room negotiations finalised. (See article page 3.)

Why not develop a log of 'real' demands, grass roots organising committees and plans for direct action when the 'iron is hot'?

See Page 7.

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

The Enterprise Bargaining charade! A blatant pretence and deception!

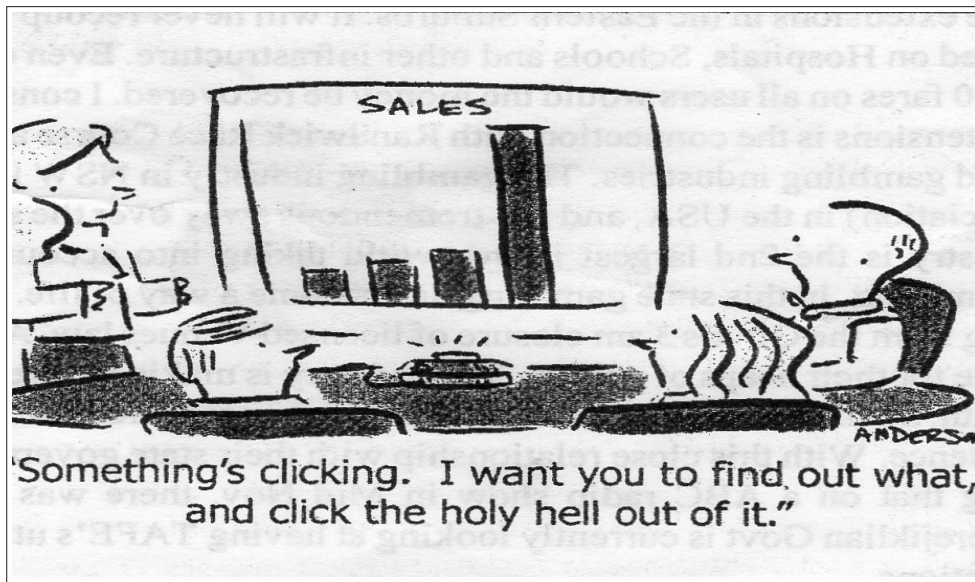
It is a genuine struggle to take this round of enterprise bargaining seriously and even more difficult for me to write seriously about this blatant charade. The only reason this farce is being played out is that everyone else is too panicked and worried about what will happen if they take an experimental drug (also known as a vaccine) and what will happen if they don't? Will they be sacked? Neither option looks good, and both overshadow the bargaining charade. What should be of concern to everyone is the fact that not only the RTBU but all unions appear willing to simply stand back and allow government to effectively sanction not only the sacking but banning of some workers from keeping and getting a job anywhere and by extension preventing people from earning a living and feeding their families. There is no democratic entity on this earth where this idea can stand. If this blatant state sanctioned segregation and discrimination is allowed to stand then we are no longer in any type of democracy know to this world, but we have entered a medical dictatorship, a medical apartheid. And if that be the case then certainly no enterprise bargaining or agreement will have any value or offer any protection to any worker or person against whom the dictator chooses to array the massive weaponry of the state. Government, like fire, is a powerful servant but a fearful master

For the sake of clarity, the definitions of: Apartheid - a policy or system of segregation or discrimination, Apparatchik - a full-time, professional functionary of the Soviet Union or the Soviet government apparatus. Charade - an absurd pretence intended to create a pleasant or respectable appearance and farce - a comic dramatic work using buffoonery and horseplay and typically including crude characterisation and ludicrously improbable situations. Without straying too far from the theme of this article, in many ways this round of so-called bargaining is simply an extension of the comical and condescending emails and messages workers are forced to endure on a weekly and monthly basis from overpaid politically correct appointees, clueless as to their true reason for being. They parrot empty platitudes and like to call themselves leaders! Yet we all know their scripts are written for them and their true purpose is to lull workers into a false sense of value and security while secretly contracts and memorandums of understanding will strip public assets from the public and destroy jobs for ever, through privatisation and automation. But don't worry these overpaid and glorified useful idiots are so proud of you, how you turn up to work every day and

face the challenges from the heart. If you believe any of that nonsense, you'll believe anything! And in the red corner we've got the unions, specifically the RTBU.

The State Secretary is of course an ALP apparatchik who has and always will put the agenda of the ALP ahead of his obligations to the RTBU membership. His primary concern being to get the ALP elected to government, at any cost, never mind what their policies may be. As many of you may know the ALP was created by the original union movement with the intent of enabling workers a voice and political representation. Over time the ALP became infiltrated by various vested interests not least of which are the Fabian socialists, who's emblem was until recently a wolf in sheep's clothing and the ALP effectively became an organisation that siphons money out of the union movement for its own agenda. The finer details of which will be covered in a future article. However, it is sufficient to say that it is a globalist agenda that aligns perhaps a little too well with the agenda of the elite and fits perfectly with the imagery of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

What is interesting here is that out of this globalist agenda comes the idea of 'super unions' and more interesting still is the very real possibility of a secret deal (in true ALP/Fabian socialist style) to amalgamate the RTBU with the TWU. This duality of purpose is nowhere more evident than in the bus privatisation. Outwardly the RTBU State Secretary makes a public show of standing 'in solidarity' with its membership by organising useless petitions while secretly working with and facilitating the representation and the collecting of membership of private bus drivers/workers by the TWU. We wrote about this duality of purpose in a previous article entitled 'New Inter City Fleet (NIF) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a memorandum of betrayal'. In this article we revealed that the RTBU state secretary had secretly entered a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with management on the New Inter City Fleet (NIF), without the knowledge of most RTBU members. In brief we argued that the MOU is a memorandum of betrayal, a Trojan Horse designed to dismantle and weaken the Enterprise Agreement from within. And how relevant it is in the current enterprise bargaining charade, where management useful idiots have been given an agenda, by law firms specifically commissioned for the task, to dismantle critical sections of the enterprise agreement, like for example the attendance management procedure, by attempting to remove it entirely from the EA, just as they did with the MOU on the NIF back in 2017, with the complicit knowledge of the RTBU State Secretary. Back then it was done to set the precedent! Once the MOU was discovered and made public the RTBU State Secretary attempted to claim that there was no secret after all, and that the MOU was presented to members at various meetings, and they put out various attendance sheets that allegedly proved their case. But the only thing the attendance sheets proved was that at some point there were meetings about something or other but nothing specific. We said however, 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; We also alleged the possibility that if there was one MOU very likely there were and are more and that leads us back to the current Enterprise Bargaining charade! A blatant pretence and deception!

As explained previously the ALP and the elite agenda are basically aligned and privatisation and automation is baked into the cake. The only thing that remains is to slowly delude workers into the false belief that this can be changed by the worker accepting virtually zero pay increases (while the useful idiots and politicians get 5% to 9%), because apparently there is no money while simultaneously billions are being

spent and lost shutting down workers livelihoods. And of course, the old chestnut that workers must give up some or all workplace rights to be competitive. Competitive with who? You may ask. And this is an obvious deception as the transport network was set up and is being run as a public sector 'SERVICE'.

The idea that it's a business is a false narrative designed to create the impression that it must be run like a business i.e., that it must make a profit and most important of all to give credibility to the idea that public sector employees who are in management positions have 'management prerogative'. This is of course another deception, because public sector management only have 'delegated authority' but like the business narrative it is designed to give credibility to the idea that management are not bound by law or the enterprise agreement i.e. they can act outside their delegated authority and not only seek to undermine and destroy lawful workplace rights and indeed safety standards but can engage expensive law firms to develop strategies that push the boundaries of legality and sometimes cross those boundaries to attack workers, workplace rights and conditions. As a side note I would argue (and the RTBU State Secretary should also, if he were serious) that these expensive law firms were in fact acting as bargaining agents for a fee and in terms of the enterprise bargaining process that may contravene the Fair Work Act. But of course, the RTBU State Secretary won't even consider that, he's too busy parroting the narrative (like his comrades in management) that the public sector 'SERVICE' is actually a business and that public sector management have 'management prerogative'. Is it any wonder workers have made no gain and only LOST pay and conditions under his dubious leadership?

The Enterprise Bargaining charade! A blatant pretence and deception!

On the one side we have a collection of useful idiots spoon-fed a narrative developed by expensive lawyers, from which they have no authority to deviate and on the other a collective ideology driven recently graduated inexperienced lawyers who have nothing in common with the average worker they claim to represent, nor do they understand the workplace. But as we have argued the whole thing is a charade designed to lull the worker into semi-consciousness so that they will not realise that their fate is already sealed with a secret MOU or two.

By a concerned NSW Rail reader

Continued from page 2.

Upcoming Fake TWU EBA Industrial Campaign in Privatised STA!

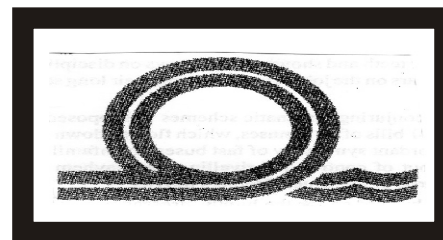
Some of the most important 'behind the scenes' news in the buses is the TWU's industrial campaign over an EBA for drivers in the privatised STA likely also in the bosses 'down time' during the holiday period in early 2022, most likely in January. See article reproduced from the Telegraph 22/5/21 'Strike threat over bus drivers' on page 10. As in the case of the RTBU's lame duck rail EBA campaign, another industrial campaign 'set up to fail' is on the agenda. The holding of industrial action during the holiday period would ineffectually release some steam from grass roots anger just like the rail strike during the lock down. It would also be in line with the TWU officials developing a fake militant profile as part of the TWU's phased takeover of the RTBU Bus Division as part of an ALP back room deal. (See article page 18.) It would also be used to divert attention away from the privatisation of the Eastern Suburbs bus depots.

Other areas we focus upon is the NSW Liberal Govt.'s pro business and incompetent handling of the COVID-19 crisis seriously affecting drivers and commuters and how management's handling of bus operations during the crisis has adversely affected drivers wages and conditions. Causing anger amongst some over mandatory vaccine jabs. (See article page 15.) An issue of great concern to ex-STA drivers is the continuation of the 'Home & Duty Opal'. We expose the RTBU officials' duplicitous handling of this issue. (See article page 15.)

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 Secretary Alex Claassens. Digitally sign the petition here: 'http://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 'rankandfile@outlook.com'. Open organising meetings are occurring. We aim to operate openly, democratically and transparently on our collective path forward to improve the lives of RTBU members.

Sparks welcomes contributions by transport workers. Please send to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW or via our web site www.sparksworld.org Subscriptions are \$5 per year. Please make out postal orders to Rebel Worker. Sparks is published by the Sydney Local of the Network for Democratic Unionism.

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WARNING: POLITICAL SATIRE

Concrete & Stealing

At 10am on Friday 12/11/21 a group attired in orange vests and white hard hats were posing in front of a row of D10 bulldozers before a swathe of housing commission homes in Redfern. This public housing was to be demolished for the construction of multi storey apartment towers charging much higher market rents. The existing low income tenants such as pensioners and low paid workers will be turfed out and forced to relocate to public housing in distant parts of the city. The group posing for the media included Dominic Perrottet new Liberal Premier of NSW, Andrew Constance-Stokes? New NSW Minister for Transport, Roadside Tree Stumps, Planning and Public Spaces, Paul Toole NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, and Stuart Ayres, NSW Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney. Others in the group were Harry Finger on the Trigger of Meritons and the CEO's from Express way, Metro and other large Construction companies such as John Holland, Ghella, CPB and Hochtief.

After the media conference, Harry 'Finger on the Trigger' and other CEO's seized the opportunity to have a quiet word with Dominic. They complained bitterly about a mounting crisis threatening their industry associated with reports in the media of widespread shoddy work and the urgency of the NSW Govt. spending massively on new construction projects. They demanded he hold an urgent meeting of NSW Inc. to tackle their concerns. They spoke menacing of freezing donations to the NSW Liberals re-election campaign if he failed to organise the holding of the meeting. Anxiously Dominic agreed to hold a meeting of NSW Inc. at 10am Monday 22/11/21 at the Transport for NSW HQ.

Soon after turning up for work next morning, Dominic emailed all his Ministers concerning the upcoming meeting together with all the CEO's from the construction industry and companies involved in various Govt. projects. He then reached the CEO of MacQuarie Bank. He advised that he and other banking bosses had been watching with dismay the growing crisis and it was about time, See page 9

a meeting was held on the issue. He would be definitely attending. Other banking big bosses also notified they would be coming. Dominic then did a ring around of union bosses.

He reached Darren Greenfield, CFMEU NSW State Secretary. Dominic quipped, that Greenfield had been keeping too much of a blind eye on the epidemic of shoddy work and accidents in the NSW construction industry over many years. It had gone too far and a big crisis was mounting. Even some of the big boys helping fund his bureaucracy were complaining! An urgent meeting of NSW Inc. was organised to tackle the fallout. Greenfield agreed to attend the gathering.

Hurry! Hurry! Post Lock Down Free Union Booze Up for Loco Division Members!

At 9.30 am, the mobile of Alex Claassens NSW State Secretary of the RTBU buzzed with a call from Premier Perrottet. He was in the midst of holding a 'Free Union Booze Up for the Loco Division Members' event. In the wee hours of the previous Saturday night there had been much suspicious and frantic activity around the union office. A fleet of trucks and vans had descended on the office. All were displaying the union logo hastily stuck on with sticky tape. Some vehicles had displayed Sydney Trains and NSW Trains logos under the sheets with the union logo!!! Intriguingly NSW Railways executives, senior managers and even the new Transport Minister Andrew Constance-Stokes? wearing tattered jeans and sporting a wig, dark glasses and a hastily glued on fake beard which kept falling off, were seen putting in some elbow grease carting cartons of tinnies, kegs of beer, boxes of vintage wine and champagne and boxes of scotch whisky from the vehicles into the union office!!!

Word had spread throughout the depots about the union free grog event. Many members were astonished that Alex could be that generous with their union dues! They had always thought the union was just about 'smoke and mirrors' performances, dirty deals made behind their backs with a sly kick in the guts and fake pay rises at EBA time just before union elections. The Sunday night before the event, vast queues of Loco Division union members had even camped with tents and sleeping bags outside the union office, ready to burst in at the stroke of 9am on Monday!

Secretary Claassens welcomed the members to the event. He explained it was organised to provide an opportunity for some post COVID-19 Lock Down union camaraderie in the Division and all the grog was sourced from the union cellars, vineyards, distillery and winery. He went on to mention there was a small 'technicality', a mere trifle. Members would need to sign off on 'meeting attendance sheets' before hitting the grog.

Just as a Loco Rep rushed to the rostrum out of breath and dramatically proposed a

Strike threat over bus drivers

'Essential part of life'

ERIN LYONS

NSW bus drivers have pledged to take strike action if necessary to improve their conditions.

Workers say they're driving while fatigued and want hours cut and longer breaks between shifts.

Delegates from privatised bus companies have come together to demand the NSW government take action and improve industry standards to pay, superannuation and safety.

The Transport Workers Union revealed several bus companies had unanimously voted to endorse a plan to lift standards or industrial action would be taken.

The union says the Berejiklian government must take responsibility for wages and conditions within the contracts it awards to private bus companies.

Among their demands are realistic timetables so drivers aren't forced to rush, reducing work hours to combat fatigue, and improving safety and pay rates so employees don't need a second job to make ends meet.

"Bus drivers are essential for the travelling public.

"We ensure people get to school, hospital appointments and supermarkets," TWU NSW bus driver secretary Richard Olsen said.

"They are a vital part of this community.

"But they have not been treated well and have been neglected by the state government."

On Friday union members



Bus driver Manish Kumar.

superannuation, Mr Olsen said. "Industrial strike action will be played out if and when it is required to do so. What we're seeking is modest and affordable," he said.

According to the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport, 113 people have been killed in bus crashes in Australia in the last five years.

Bus drivers are frequently subjected to attacks by passengers and members of the public, the union claims.

Bus driver Manish Kumar said he was forced to do 13-hour shifts, leaving little time to spend with his children.

"(I wake up) feeling tired and then I'm going to hit the road with a 20-tonne bus," he said.

He wants shifts to be reduced to 12 hours with at least a 10-hour break in between.

Fellow NSW bus driver Marta Folkard said she would never have enough money to retire.

She said she had spent many years out of work while raising her children.

"I have two options: I work until I drop dead or I sell my house and move in with my twin sister, which isn't the best

toast to "Secretary Claassens may long he live and inspire us! and a big round of applause!" A member was shocked to notice something 'irregular' with the attendance sheets. Some of the sticky tape had come off from one sheet

revealing under 'Free Union Booze Up For Loco Division Members', 'Approval of New Memorandum of Understanding for Driver Only Operation on New Interurban Fleet (NIF) incorporated in NSW Trains EBA 2021 rubber stamped as 'Safe' by Corporate Insider and 'not independent' safety regulator and we agree with management 'prerogative' to introduce DOO!!!' The shocked member was fuming and yelling at Claassens, "Alex are you trying to con us with these sheets and event!" Rapidly Bus Division officials David Babineau and Roger 'Daggers in the back of STA drivers' who had just turned up after a meeting with Constance-Stokes? to okay new bus route cuts to prepare for STA privatisation, intervened. They started shouting down the member and hustled him out of the room. Other members were drawn into a massive fracas and wild melee. A panicky Claassens hurriedly escaped the room with the excuse of a call from Perrottet and an assortment of well aimed karate chops and head butts to break out of a scrum of enraged members stunned by his sudden dazzling display of direct action!!! After catching his breath, Claassens got on his mobile and took the call from Perrottet. On hearing the nervous tone of his voice, Premier Perrottet enquired whether there was anything wrong. "Just a little disgruntlement amongst the Loco members. Nothing we can't handle," he mumbled. He went on to say that he and Babineau and Jaggers from the Bus Division would be delighted to attend the emergency NSW Inc. meeting to help out such outstanding entrepreneurs as Harry

'Finger on the Trigger' and other developer and construction industry identities. Perrottet then reached Richard Olsen NSW TWU State Secretary. Olsen advised he'd try to squeeze attendance at the conference into his schedule for that day. In the afternoon he was having another meeting with Bob Narva NSW ALP President regarding finalising his union's takeover of coverage of drivers in Region 6 and 9 from the RTBU. Later he would be having his weekly 'touch base' meetings with the General Managers of Toll and Transit Systems and then the US Embassy Labour Attache. Perrottet quipped, "Ricky, you're certainly going to be a busy boy that day!" The Premier went on to contact other union supremos who gladly indicated their attendance.

On the dot of 10am 22/11/21, Perrottet flashing his big toothy smile, strode confidently into the conference room at Transport for NSW HQ. He welcomed his Ministers, various CEO's and high up union bosses to the meeting. He explained the chief reason for holding this special emergency meeting of NSW Inc. was the spiralling crisis in the construction industry which has gone completely out of control with massive publicity in media outlets. Another reason for the gathering was the urgent need to supercharge expenditure on new construction projects to help avoid a new recession as a result of the COVID-19 renewed outbreak in the State.

He confided conspiratorially to his corporate high roller audience that the lock downs and the new wave of COVID-19 infections had been a deliberate sneaky policy of the Liberal Govt. under his predecessor Gladys in the job to put the kibosh on any new wave of wage increases, but things had gone out of control. He spoke darkly of some business small fry having to go to the wall from the lock down restrictions but those on top of the pile would benefit greatly in the long run with profits. It was urgent that we get a handle on the mounting crisis and take measures to cut, cut and cut his Govt.'s expenditure on public transport, health, TAFES and other areas. His Govt. would certainly consider the location of new metro stations in the vicinity of developers tower construction projects. Constance-Stokes? head of the NSW Liberals Re-Election Fund, would arrange 'discrete' lobbying consultations at obscure locations for a certain consideration at the conclusion of the meeting. Andrew would even supply google maps for discrete park benches. "Before I open this conference for suggestions, good old Harry 'Finger on the Trigger' who you all know and respect wants to have a few words," he continued.

Harry strode up to the rostrum. He ranted piteously about the looming loss of billions of dollars, he and his developer colleagues were facing if decisive and urgent action wasn't taken to remedy the crisis of confidence in their tower projects. The constant media exposure of hazardous cladding in their towers will kill us. He emphasised that the developer fraternity couldn't afford the million bucks worth of appropriate remediation work for each of the hundreds of our apartment high rises. We can only possibly afford bargain basement measures. The Govt. had to clamp down on any



"A 34% cut in our corporate ethics should return us to profitability"

local Community obstruction which will cost them big. Our towers, Metro stations and platinum plated tunnels need fast tracking. He wondered out loud, "Why not transfer approval of developments from Local Councils to Constance-Stokes? our Minister for Rapid Development without right of appeal from disgruntled locals?"

Premier Perrottet then opened the floor to a 'round robin'.

One bright spark, Melinda Pavey, NSW Minister for Housing suggested some easy ways to free up budget monies and raise extra funds. "My department could ignore residents pleas for maintenance and if pushed stall on maintenance work with the excuse of budgetary restraints, lost paper work and inadequate staffing levels. If finally maintenance work does get done, my department could provide cheap and faulty parts. So eventually the tenants will be forced to leave and the property can be sold off or demolished for high rise towers." She then proposed a further idea, "We could get our building inspectors to apply a new 'risk

management' approach to checking new developments to ensure rapid construction."

Next to jump in with a 'constructive suggestion' was CFMEU NSW State Secretary Greenfield, he would ensure that his 'union' via his union reps and organisers would ensure OH&S intervention on the job as just window dressing and allows developers to rush through construction projects.

UPCOMING FAKE TWU PRIVATISED STA EBA INDUSTRIAL CAMPAIGN

Richard Olsen from the TWU joined in with a report on the 'good work' his union was doing. He was 'setting up to fail' the Privatised STA workers EBA industrial campaign. Holding it during the January 2022 holiday period. In this way he would help dampen down any industrial disruption, avoid a wages blow out and generally lower morale for more cutbacks in the buses and diverting attention from privatisation of the Eastern STA bus depots. It will also help his union to acquire a fake militant profile as part of our phased takeover of the RTBU Bus Division and to ensure to further cutback ex-STA drivers wages and conditions.

Alex Claassens from the RTBU, was in fine form. He cracked some

jokes about his union's ludicrous Rail EBA 'campaign' antics during the COVID-19 lock down with 40% of members stood down, involving the 24 hour graffiti cleaning ban, trains sounding their horns on station departures and holding an ineffectual 4 hour off peak hour strike during the lock down and even the school holidays to harmlessly let off some steam from grass roots discontent and the avoidance of building a mass meeting using the pretext of COVID-19 restrictions. With the Rail EBA 'approval' we can get the traditional fake pay rise sweetener for members before the upcoming union elections. With secret ALP Octopus tentacles and AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) ballot rigging help like back in the previous 2014 and 2018 union elections my union leadership team will have no problems remaining in our positions.

He then proceeded to cheer his audience with stories of his tireless efforts to hoodwink members in the Loco Division to okay Driver Only Operation for the NIF and the recent rubber stamping by the neither independent or safe regulator as part of the incorporation in the new NSW Trains 2021 EBA. Swinging open the flood gates to privatisation of the NSW Railways already facilitated by the mysterious 'Transport Asset Holding Entity' which now owns rail assets, set up back in 2014. It would handsomely fill Dominic's Govt. coffers and push new waves of cutbacks to rail workers wages and conditions. As occurred with ex-STA drivers following the privatisation of parts of State Transit.

Constance- Stokes? proposed making a top priority the approval of billions of dollars in loans from the NSW Govt. to Harry and his developer fraternity for the construction of their rows of apartment towers along the new underground railway to the new airport. The rail line needed fast tracking and a willingness to blow more billions if over budget. He had another brain storm: "Why not cut the number of building inspectors in NSW by 50%, from 34 to 17 using the pretext of Post COVID-19 Lock Down budgetary constraints?", he proposed.

Not since the Askin Liberal NSW Government have we seen such sophisticated stealing by Liberal Governments. Day light robbery by a Government!

NEW BOOK PUBLISHED ABOUT SYDNEY BUSES

'LIFE and TIMES On SYDNEY BUSES' by Mary-Jane Field.

Check author's personal Web Site to order copies.

Reviewed in Issue 144 of the Magazine 'Trad and Now'.

SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

Wildcat Unleashed at Smithfield Depot!

On Thursday 9/9/21, 180 drivers at Transit Systems Smithfield depot in Western Sydney went on a wildcat strike following one driver at the depot being tested positive for COVID-19. The drivers were protesting the cessation by management of regular COVID-19 testing of workers. The industrial action affected 20 bus routes. The TWU officials were able to pressure the drivers to return to work less than 24 hours after the start of the wildcat with the promise from management that regular COVID-19 antigen testing of drivers would resume. The wildcat followed two-hour stop work safety meetings held by TWU members at four Western Sydney bus depots on Monday 6/9/21 over the NSW Govt.'s decision to end workplace COVID testing. Typically, the RTBU officials made no public comment about the Smithfield depot stoppage, despite members in the Buses, Trams and Sydney and NSW Trains being affected by the issue.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What has been the situation at the depot under the COVID-19 restrictions?

Leichhardt Driver: Initially the Transit Systems bosses were getting up to something nasty. They were intending not to pay those drivers from the ultra locked down areas of the South Western suburbs such as Fairfield who initially had to remain at home despite being involved in an essential service. However within 24 hours the bosses backed down. It seems they were pressured by Transport for NSW and the Govt. Subsequently, the restriction rules in these areas were changed allowing those involved in an essential service to work outside the ultra locked down area but they required regular COVID-19 tests.

Sparks: What are your impressions of the impact of the new cut backs on bus services as part of the toughened COVID-19 restrictions?

LD: The Govt. and the bosses have shown quite poor planning in regard to the further lock down restriction of imposing a 50% to 30% reduction in public transport services. In the buses from Monday 19/7/21 the Sunday roster and timetable has been imposed until 2/8/21. According to the Govt.'s rationalisation for the measure, more people would be encouraged to remain at home and avoid mixing. So reducing the spread of the virus. However we have noticed that there

doesn't seem much change with the number of commuters wanting to catch buses at peak hours. With the reduction of allowed numbers of passengers on our normal buses reduced to such as 12, we have often noticed a line of passengers still left after reaching the allowed number of passengers and leaving the stop. However, now the bosses are increasing the number of buses on the road from the early afternoon on week days to meet the commuter demand. At the depot on Sunday 18/7/21 there was under staffing of drivers of 42 and on Monday 19/7/21 there were 80 spares. However in contrast to the Sunday roster before the new restrictions with such runs as the 470, there would be one bus which runs all night to meet demand. Now with the roster/timetable change associated with the new restriction measure there is no provision for such a bus.

STOP PRESS: On Wednesday 11/8/21 two depot staff were reported COVID-19 infected with the majority of depot staff including drivers considered casual contacts and put in self isolation awaiting COVID-19 test results. 19 routes have been heavily affected with cancelled runs for two days. Coaches and buses from other companies have been operated to make up for the cancelled runs from the depot.

Sparks: What have been the latest developments with the COVID outbreak at the depot?

LD: Those who were made to go home and self isolate due to the COVID outbreak, were paid their normal average Mon.-Fri. weekly wage. Now management has advised that those who won't wear the mask due to medical exemptions will also have to go home but will be paid the weekly average wage. Those not wearing the mask without such an exemption will also have to go home but won't be paid their wages. The Govt. and the bosses are requiring from 30/9/21 that we all have to have the jabs for the COVID vaccine with a week of grace if you still have not been able to get the jabs. Many of us at the depot are very opposed to wearing the mask and getting the jabs. **STOPPRESS:** There has been a series of legal challenges against the mandatory vaccinations.

From 23/8/21 an amended Saturday timetable was introduced except that Sunday continues with the Sunday timetable/roster. Associated with this move, management has introduced a new working set up across Transit Systems Region 6 for both ex-STA and new drivers. They have introduced a 'Team A' and 'Team B' system. Those in 'Team A' get paid their normal average Mon.-Fri. wage for a fortnight but also get weekend work. While 'Team B' stays at home for the fortnight but only get paid their normal average wage for Mon.-Fri. Its not clear if there is a short staffing of 'Team A' drivers, will 'Team B' drivers be called back to work? Other news is that many in management are now working from home.

'HOME & DUTY' OPAL ENTITLEMENT

Sparks: What has been the situation with the 'Home & Duty' Opal

entitlement since privatisation?

LD: Since Region 6 STA privatisation 3 years ago on 1/7/2018, ex-STA drivers have still retained the Home & Duty Opal though no interstate pass. However new drivers coming on the job since this date of privatisation have had no such entitlement. Now the Govt. and the bosses are continuing this entitlement for ex-STA drivers for a further two years. In early Sept. the RTBU officials have issued a circular stating that they want to have the 'Home & Duty' Opal entitlement included into our Award not just in our RTBU EBA. As they imply this entitlement will then be completely secured and can't be traded away like occurs with EBA's. The Govt.'s decision to extend this entitlement seems in line with the delay in the privatisation of the rest of the STA associated with the renewed COVID-19 outbreak.

RTBU Officials 'Smoke & Mirrors' Performance & 'Home & Duty' Opal!

Editorial Comment: This is a dangerous illusion the RTBU officials are peddling in regard to securing this entitlement. The award system which was introduced in the early 20th Century associated with the establishment of the Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation Commissions was never set up to preserve conditions, but to avoid industrial disruption. Even in those days in certain sectors, award entitlements had to be enforced by industrial action. In the Post WWII period until the advent of the ALP Whitlam Federal Govt. wages indexation policy in 1975 and the ALP-ACTU Prices & Incomes Accords 1983-96, award wage increases won by industrial action by the bureaucratic Metal Trades unions 'flowed on' to the awards of unions in other sectors. Given the RTBU officials legalistic lame duck record, fake strike threats, lame duck, ineffectual industrial action and avoidance of effective industrial action in regard to fighting privatisation and associated savage attacks on wages and conditions, any such award condition may become a dead letter.

Sparks: What are your impressions of the recent COVID-19 scare at the depot?

Leichhardt Busie: As a result of several infections at the depot, the bosses have sent many of us home to have COVID-19 tests. The bosses have had Murrays, Hills and other private bus companies running shuttle services on many of our routes. We are particularly angry that management seems likely to compel us to have the COVID-19 vaccine jab. We are intending to approach a solicitor to legally challenge any such move by the bosses. We consider that we have the right to exert control over our own bodies.

Waverley Depot News

Sparks: What are the latest developments at the depot?

Waverley Busie: There has been a significant change in early July. Since this time



there has been notices put up in the depot advertising vacancies for new drivers and refuellers. For many months there was a freeze on recruitment of drivers except for Mona Vale which is 34 km's from the city. The reason given by the STA bosses for the freeze has been the looming privatisation. As a result the depot has been run effectively on skeleton staffing levels. With huge amounts of overtime imposed on existing drivers, causing the likely burnout of many due to overwork. Resulting in the need to recruit new staff. Any meetings and training courses away from the depot remain abolished. Its likely we will only get a trickle of new drivers just to keep things moving, given the low patronage of bus routes provided by the depot due to the COVID-19 outbreak and lock down restrictions. Prior to the lockdown there would be huge numbers of commuters on bus services going to Bondi and other beaches. Now there are very few commuters on these bus runs. From Monday 19/7/21 until Monday 2/8/21 bus services from the depot and other STA and Transit Systems depots have been put on Sunday rosters/timetables by the previous Berejiklian Govt. using the pretext of toughened COVID-19 lock down restrictions.

Sparks: What have been the ramifications of the imposing of the new Sunday timetable during the lock down for commuters?

WB: It has definitely disadvantaging some commuters. Recently one commuter was extremely angry over the change. She was a nurse working at a local hospital and was unable to catch her normal bus to arrive at her job on time. Consequently she had to pay \$40 a day for a Uber, which she can't afford. The Govt. had taken a one size fits all

approach and has seriously disadvantaged many commuters who work in essential services. The service cuts are presented for your safety but are certainly in line with other revenue raising and budget saving measures of the previous Berejiklian Govt. such as speed cameras. Until recently when the issue became a political hot potato and seized upon by the ALP, the previous Berejiklian Govt. kept the cameras location a secret to catch motorists and raise revenue. In contrast to other States such as South Australia which have normally advised the location of the cameras with signs in the area and through media outlets. Then the previous Berejiklian Govt. had signs put up to advise the camera locations.

Where is our OH&S?

Sparks: What are your thoughts on the impact of the renewed COVID-19 outbreak at Waverley?

WB: There are some disturbing aspects of the previous Berejiklian Govt's role in the renewed outbreak. The Delta strain originally broke out just 1 or 2 kms from the depot. A non-vaccinated hire car driver not wearing a mask had contracted the delta strain from overseas travellers in quarantine causing the virus to spread in Sydney. Despite the highly contagious and dangerous nature of the virus and the outbreak a short distance from depot, why didn't the Govt. impose an immediate lock down at Waverley, Randwick depots and a ring around the surrounding Eastern Suburbs? Why the soft lock down approach? This seeming incompetent approach is emblematic of how the previous Berejiklian Govt. handled crises. This virus is very dangerous unlike the flu. Safety was not put on for drivers. The attitude of the STA bosses and the Govt. seemed to be 'business as usual' under the pressure of big business. Many drivers at the depot seemed unaware of the looming threat of virus infection.

At Waverley there are many opposed to being jabbed with the COVID-19 vaccine. However inoculations for various diseases have been compulsory at schools over the years without any noticeable ill effects for the students. Why hasn't the STA approached the Health Department to send their people with equipment to depots to provide COVID-19 vaccinations? In this way drivers and other staff could avoid wasting time at Doctors' surgeries and vaccination centres on their day off.

Kingsgrove Depot News

Sparks: There's been talk in the buses about a deal made by the RTBU and TWU officials to give coverage of regions 6 and 9 to the TWU in exchange for RTBU keeping coverage of 7 and 8. Can you confirm whether this is true and if there is any other relevant info?

Kingsgrove Driver 1: These deals between the RTBU and TWU are the reason why membership of unions and the Labor Party are in decline.

Handshakes and Back Room Deals

Bus drivers talk about a past when unions were strong and ask “what happened?”

Unions talk about, “Look what we have achieved in the past.” Union membership is in decline. Today, the Labor Party and Unions have lost the confidence of the workers and members. This is reflected in State and Federal elections. Acting like Mafia cartels, dividing up territories, memberships, properties. On the pretence of acting for the members best interests. Anybody asked the members? NO!

Over 800 RTBU members and 400 potential members were gifted to the TWU in region 6 on the pretence of peace between the unions. Workers in region 6 went to court to change our rules so we could choose which union we wanted to belong to.

We stood in the dock. Shoulder to shoulder in the battle and won. Our Bus and Tram Division put up a resolution to fight and were abandoned just as we were winning the battles. The battle was about choice. Freedom to choose association. Freedom to choose our destiny. Our brothers and sisters that had the courage to stand and fight at the Eureka Stockade. Stone masons had achieved the 8hr day.

All that we have achieved by making a stand for what is right is slowly being dismantled by the political elite.

BRING BACK THE POWER TO THE WORKERS! THE ONES THAT HAVE THE COURAGE TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS!

Sparks: What are your impressions of the talk of the TWU takeover of the RTBU Bus Division as part of a ALP back room deal?

Kingsgrove Driver 2: At a late May RTBU executive meeting our union rep was even thrown out for loudly criticising State Secretary Claassens over complicity in the dirty deal. The deal comprised a trade off of region 6 and 9 comprising the Eastern Suburbs with union coverage taken over by the TWU. Whilst the TWU won't dispute RTBU coverage of regions 7 and 8 on the Nth Shore.

SYDNEY LIGHT RAIL NEWS

On Tuesday 28/9/21, around 60 drivers and RTBU Bus & Tram Division members from the Inner West Light Rail (IWLRL) service took strike action from 7am to 9am and again from 3pm to 5pm. The union officials refused to publicise this action during the rail strike digital picket on that day and on their Facebook page seeking to maintain divisions amongst public transport workers.

The workers are seeking similar pay and conditions as drivers on the CBD and South East Light Rail (CELR) line. Its also run by Transdev. IWLRL workers wages are up to 15 percent less per hour than their counterparts on the CELRL and advance more slowly through pay grades. CELRL drivers can reach the highest pay grade after three years, while those on the IWLRL have to put in at least five years of service.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of Sparks we will discuss the issues of nepotism and dismissals at V/Line. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.

Sparks: What is the current situation at Southern Cross?

Archie: New starts are being dismissed a couple of days before the six months probation concludes.

Rastus: The same thing is happening with the drivers. Some drivers who have come from other Train Operating Companies have been terminated on trivial issues.

Forsyth: When new starts commence their employment with V/Line, they are on probation for six months. If management considers they are not suitable they are terminated.

Sheona: We will give an example of a recent case. One of the Customer Service employees on probation signed on for an early shift. The employee had worked into their sixth hour of their shift and was informed on their work mobile phone to report to the office. The employee reported to the manager.

Clarence: In the presence of the manager and a Human Resources consultant attached to Southern Cross the employee was told their services were no longer required. No reason was given and the employee was marched off by a security guard to clear their locker and escorted off the station.

Sparks: What of the other employees?

Jethro: The other employees at Southern Cross found out 72 hours after the dismissal occurred. No employee is allowed to discuss the dismissal or disciplinary action is taken.

Clarence: The position was filled after a few weeks. As we have said in previous issues, V/Line has a talent pool of applicants hoping to obtain a position.

Rastus: We Drivers wonder if any of the new starts are related to managers in Head Office. We know of an incident at a Country Depot when a person who was a friend of a Supervisor obtained a position as a Station officer at a station over internal applicants. Unfortunately this person failed the safe working classes and was terminated.

Ichabod: The union is unsure what is happening but they cannot do anything for employees on probation. The union should be notified when a dismissal is to happen. The union should defend the employee and demand that the probation be extended while the employee fights for a permanent position.

Rastus: With the drivers a person on probation is defended by the union with the result most probations have been extended with most of the trainee drivers keeping

their position.

Ichabod: Unfortunately at Southern Cross Customer Service employees have no union representative. Employees are frightened to nominate for the position as when asked to take the position they say he will be marked by Human Resources for their working life.

Sparks: What is the situation with other employees?

Archie: With conductors the good news is with the exception of four rosters which are rest jobs is all other rest jobs have been removed from the roster.

Forsyth: Most conductors are pleased these rest jobs have disappeared as you were away from your families for up to thirty hours.

Moose: The down side is a fair amount of part time employees have been recruited at Southern Cross and Country Depots.

Ichabod: A fair amount of overtime has disappeared with part time employees picking up overtime shifts.

Moose: This matter will have to be worked through. Overtime is still worked but it seems some people are being given the jobs. The union will have to come down on this practice.

Archie: It is rumoured that an instruction has come from Head Office to work less overtime.

Midge: As a result of this instruction the staff clerks are resorting to dodgy methods to cover shifts. The Customer Service staff do not receive any overtime. If they are sick the shift is not covered.

Moose: Buffets have been resumed on trains but if a conductor is sick the Buffet on the train does not operate.

Rastus: The same thing is happening with drivers. If a driver is unavailable or if the train is defective the train is cancelled. The trains are replaced by buses on Regional Services but on lines with frequent services you take the next train. The rumour is that V/Line has 38 of the Velocity Trains out of service for repairs. You see with 80 velocity sets in service, the maintenance staff has not been increased.

Roscoe: Due to the shortage of Velocity parts some trains on Geelong, Bacchus Marsh, Ballarat, Seymour and Trevelyan lines are running at three car units instead of six car trains even on the peak hours. The conductors on these trains have to cop the flak from the passengers. In the case of cancelled trains on the Seymour line the wait could be up to eighty minutes in off peak.

Sparks: What about career paths for employees?

Forsyth: What career paths? It has been discussed in previous issues of **Sparks**. **Recently they advertised for shunters but the positions were to be for outside appointees. It was the same with driving positions.**

Ichabod: That's not all they advertised for a conductor OJT position but none of the long term conductors were successful. It is alleged that the person who obtained the

position (who is management's golden boy) is related to a person in Head Office.

Archie: This person had an unfair advantage over the other applicants in that management arranged to change this person's shifts to suit his courses he was studying.

Midge: We conductors are upset as other persons asked to have their shifts changed to attend courses and they were knocked back.

Ichabod: Older conductors remember how other conductors were trained in staff clerk duties, and CSM positions, whilst other conductors were denied. We regard this as nepotism. Refer to issue 131.

Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. It is obvious that nepotism in both driving and other positions is rampant and it must be stamped out. The issue of job probation needs to be negotiated by union and management.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say. If you apply for a position and you notice other persons have been coached for the position notify IBAAC of what is happening. Make sure that everything is documented.

This is the story of the V/Line depot at Bendigo. Once upon a time the depot was a pleasant place to work. Not now as Bendigo has a work environment which is toxic. In this issue of Sparks employees from this area plus our usual contributors will discuss the issues. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.

Sparks: What has happened in the Bendigo region?

Rastus and Roscoe: The situation in Bendigo is toxic. Two new managers have been appointed. One a Senior Manager who controls Bendigo and the North Eastern Region. The other is a Conductor Service Manager.

Sheona: The managers were appointed to these positions in an attempt to change the work culture.

Roscoe: In other words have a compliant work force.

Archie: We will introduce you to two employees from the area. We will not say where they work as V/Line will try to track them down.

Harriet and Herbert: We do not like the new managers from the area particularly the Conductor Service Manager. To us he is a PIG!

Sparks: Where did the two individuals come from?

Harriet: The Manager came from a Supermarket Chain where he was a logistics manager and the Conductor Service Manager came from another part of V/Line where he was hated.

Herbert: The previous CSM was promoted to the Health and Safety and the position was advertised. One of the applicants was the previous person who held the position. This person was promoted to the Training Department but due

to a restructure was declared redundant.

Ichabod: This is another story which will be reported in a future issue of Sparks.

Harriet: These two Managers have no experience in managing a railway and they will not listen to advice from employees. It is either their way or no way.

Rastus: The drivers in Bendigo hate this manager. He started to interfere with Train Rostering and he ordered a Velocity Train to run to Melbourne with two defective toilets.

Archie: If a train has defective toilets it is usually attached to another unit and runs as empty cars with the other unit taking the passengers.

Harriet: The CSM soon made his mark by bullying conductors. One conductor was made to front over an incident and the argument became heated with the conductor telling the manager where to go.

Sparks: What happened?

Herbert: The CSM ran bleating to Human Resources.

Harriet: The incident could have been settled when things cooled down. But no, the CSM had to run to Human Resources.

Herbert: The conductor was told if he did not retire then V/Line would terminate him and he would not get the retirement benefits.

Harriet: The conductor who had 44 years in the job retired. There was no retirement function.

Herbert: The CSM showed what a dunce he was. Due to a shortage of conductors he had to run a train to Echuca. He asked if Echuca was in the MYKI area.

Rastus: In other words he had no knowledge of the V/Line fare structure.

Sparks: What is the story of the dismissal of a manager?

Harriet: The two individuals clashed from day one with the new manager being at fault.

Herbert: In October 2020 the manager was stood down over a trivial issue.

Roscoe: We do not know what the issue was but as soon as employees in the area heard of the stand down, they resorted to social media with support of the manager.

Harriet: Disciplinary action was threatened but as employees used their own IPADS and IPHONES no disciplinary action could be taken.

Sheona: The manager was stood down for over five months. V/Line was told by its integrity officer that there was no grounds to sack the manager.

Harriet: During the time the manager was stood down, managers from other areas were sent to Bendigo to do the manager's job.

Rastus: Think of the relieving expenses that would have to be paid.

Archie: V/Line knows how to waste money as in one instance an employee was stood down for over twelve months.

Harriet: In March 2021 V/Line made a decision. The manager was called to V/Line Head Office and sacked.

Herbert: The same day a senior V/Line manager travelled to Bendigo to praise the new manager for the wonderful job he was doing.

Rastus and Roscoe: A couple of weeks after the manager was sacked V/Line sacked the Integrity Officer. It is obvious V/Line wanted a Yes man in the position.

Ichabod: As soon as it became known the manager had been sacked, messages appeared on Social Media getting stuck into V/Line over his treatment. You see he had 45 years in the job.

Archie: The employees in late April held a function for the manager. This was attended by over 100 people. Included were retired employees, managers and employees from all over the state.

Harriet: Human Resources became unnerved over the toxic environment at Bendigo and sent a representative to interview the employees.

Rastus and Roscoe: We hope these employees tell this person what they think of these two managers.

Herbert: The matter is before Fair Work Australia and we expect V/Line to dig up dirt on the manager.

Harriet: V/Line employees have made a vow that when the sacked manager travels by train he will be treated as a retired employee.

Herbert: During the last six months a clerical employee was employed as a secretary to the new manager. We do not know why she left after a few weeks.

Harriet: The rumours circulating are she was being harassed and resigned. On her resignation she demanded an exit interview which was denied.

Sparks: Unfortunately we have run out of space, but thank you to Harriet and Herbert for under threat of dismissal having the courage to come forward.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the way the sacked manager was treated is disgraceful. We drivers hope he wins his case of Unfair Dismissal. As for Tweedeldee and Tweedeldum we have one word for you. Get out of the Rail Industry. You are not wanted.

STOP PRESS:

As this issue goes to press word has reached Sparks that the V/Line Board has been sacked and the V/Line is now directly controlled by the Victorian Government. Also sackings of Staff with less than six months service is still continuing. Details next issue.

