

No. 168

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# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**IT'S TIME TO MELT GLADY'S WAGE  
FREEZE WITH DIRECT ACTION TO  
SECURE WAGES & CONDITIONS  
JUSTICE & FIGHT PRIVATISATION!**



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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important recent news in the NSW Railways was the overwhelming vote in a management organised ballot about varying existing EBA's, against the NSW Govt's Public Sector Wage Freeze associated 0.3% p.a. wage rise in Sydney Trains and NSW Trains. However there have been no moves by the RTBU hierarchy to wage an industrial campaign to defeat the wage freeze such as the holding of union mass meetings and the development of a log of claims. In this edition of Sparks we are presenting some ideas to get the campaign rolling such as some proposals for a log of claims. With the end of the holiday period and the COVID-19 pandemic lock downs and restrictions, sectors of business are desperate to re-coop profits so a favourable period exists for an industrial campaign. (See article page 3.)

In Sydney Buses new revelations have come to hand about massive wage cuts by Transit Systems management in Region 6 affecting ex-STA drivers following recent roster changes. These brutal attacks highlight the importance of fighting privatisation with direct action. While exposing the fraudulent response of the RTBU Bus Division officials with their bogus talk of a threatened 48 hour strike and the holding of a staff meeting rather than a union mass meeting on the privatisation issue to head off any grass roots push for an industrial campaign. In this edition of Sparks we sketch the likely phasing of the carve up for privatisation of the rump of the STA. (See article page 10.)

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. '<http://forms.gle/6NydMdUzda7eoAuz9>'. See PDF form of the petition attached to this bulletin. Return completed petitions at '[rankandfilefirst@outlook.com](mailto:rankandfilefirst@outlook.com)'.

Register for our emailing list and ask any questions by sending an email to '[rankandfile@outlook.com](mailto: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.sparksweb.org](http://www.sparksweb.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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## N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

### How Not To Negotiate an EBA

*By Crimson Coconut*

**Despite public transport workers being praised for being “essential workers” who risked their lives during the pandemic, the NSW Government set out to punish them by effectively cutting their wages. Like nurses, public servants and teachers, public transport workers kept services running despite threats to their health.**

The reward for effort from the Government came in the form of an attempted variation of an existing E.B.A. for NSW Trains and Sydney Trains staff. They were to be rewarded by reducing the current pay rise to a paltry 0.3% rise, backdated to July. This would have been the most basic of insults and pure bastardry against workers in the essential industries. In November 2020 the NSW Government promised to slash the nominal 2.5% pay rise to 1.5% for all public servants under the cover of saving \$1.5 billion over 3 years due to the pandemic. The NSW Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet, at the time, said that the wage freeze would create more jobs. This did not make sense as many transport workers were already working overtime just to keep up with the demands of the pandemic. Also extra part time staff had been hired to ensure that pandemic level cleaning and safety was adequate. At no stage of the process did either NSW Unions or any of the individual unions organise any fightback in workplaces against the cuts or the proposal. That is a failure of union organisation. Any decent union faced with what was effectively a cut to the living standards of NSW workers surely had to take the issues to the workplace and to the streets. It's not that hard, really. Instead the unions mounted a determined effort to lobby members of the Upper House of the NSW Government to not pass the bill that would lead to a wage cut. This strategy turns its back on the principle that there is “power in the workers”. Once again workers were sidelined in the struggle for power and the strength needed to defeat the bill once and for all. It's simply a lazy strategy where you ask favours from old friends in the parliamentary system.

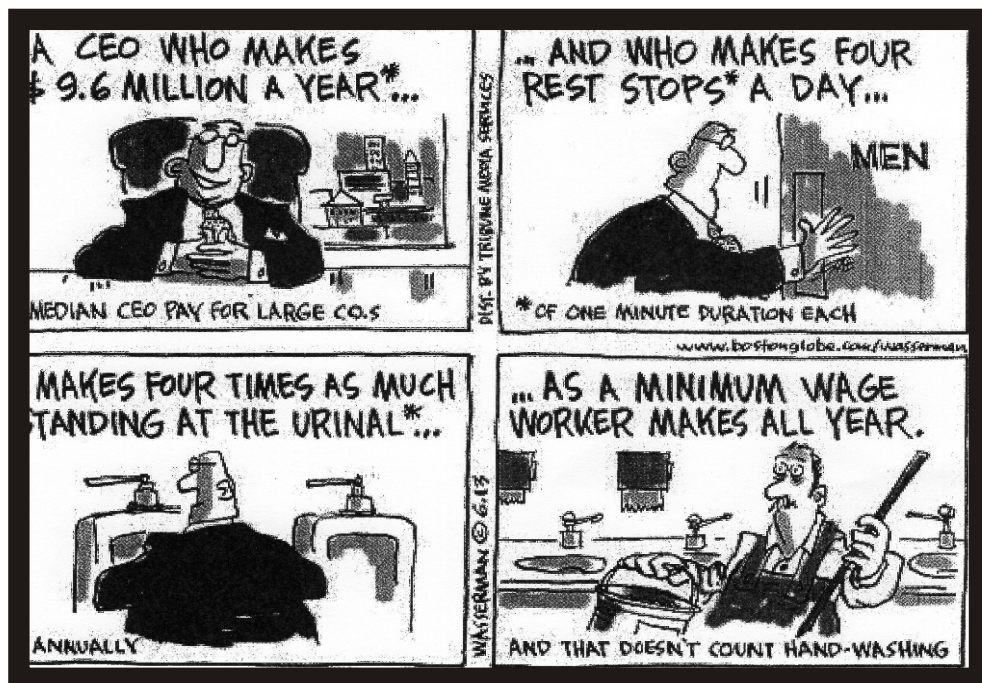
Meeting with workers, working out a strategy together and showing some real leadership by taking them along for the ride would not only empower union members for the struggles ahead, it would embolden them to the point where they could see the strength they possessed in solidarity. Instead they were isolated from a process that is poorly understood and was ineffective in the long run. Meanwhile the Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, made statements about everyone sacrificing for the good of the State and Nation. In saying that she was only talking about workers on the front lines making the sacrifices, just as businesses were getting massive tax cuts, wage subsidies and other handouts. The proposed wage cut however was defeated in the NSW Upper House. Because of that the Government almost immediately appealed to the Industrial Relations Commission who overruled the elected representatives who were opposing the wage freeze. The IRC awarded a pay rise of just 0.3% to “stop

workers going backwards.” Yes, the wage freeze was defeated in the upper house through lobbying. However in the long run workers and their unions came out of it weaker because they failed to mount an education campaign, a resistance campaign or any other workplace fightback. The Parliament is not where workers' interests or power resides. It was easy for the Berejiklian Government to bypass any semblance of democracy by an appeal for intervention by the State in the form of the IRC. Workers and the unions were bypassed by this manoeuvre by the Government. This points to the limits of Trade Unionism when it is not activating those on the shop floor to fight for their own interests. Instead they took shortcuts using instruments which did not represent workers interests. I doubt whether the IRC would have made such a bastard of a judgement on the 0.3% if a proper fightback had been organised from the start and mass rallies of workers including nurses, teachers, transport workers and other public servants had taken place. Early in 2021 NSW Trains and Sydney Trains notified us that they wished to vary the award due to the unconvincing arguments that the NSW Government had made earlier. While the rail unions supported the members outrage against the wage freeze of 0.3% they issued bulletins urging members to oppose the vote to vary the award which had been organised by rail management. A few weeks ago the variation to the award was voted down by a resounding 87% of public transport workers. However voting this ridiculous proposal down is only the beginning. What needs to happen next is the organisation of workers that are subject to the proposal into a democratic fighting unit. The campaign needs to be open, transparent and supportive. There already exists an agreed EBA with pay rises. All attempts to vary the current award that leaves workers worse off must be resisted. Even if that means breaking or defying the rules that are imposed by the Fair Work Commission. There is nothing to be gained by the unions sitting down with Rail Management to negotiate the EBA if we are starting off from such a very low base. If they raise expectations about a pay rise which is slightly better than the current offer of 0.3% but less than that on offer from the original EBA it will still be a loss for us workers. Obviously by putting forward such a low offer (i.e. cutting wages) management is saying that anything above that base offer is a win. It is not. No negotiations should take place until there is at least an offer of a wage rise that was equal or better than that offered in the last EBA. That should be the starting point. There is no point in going backwards. To reinforce our negotiating position we should be putting forward a log of claims of our own that we want to set as a starting point. There are plenty of issues that could be put forward which would better our lives. However these claims should come from workers themselves rather than from the union hierarchy alone..

Here is an example of some of the issues that could make up a log of claims: \* Stopping people stepping up in grades when staff at that grade are available. \* Transitioning part time staff, who request it, to full time work. \* Provide adequate PPE during pandemics with special training to prevent infection.

\* Insist on halting privatisation providing security of employment. \* No cuts to existing wages and conditions. \* A real wage rise based on rising living costs. There are many other issues that you, the reader, could put forward. Other things that are needed to combat these cuts include better coordination between the various unions affected by the 0.3% cut. Joint rallies of members from the various unions, including those at shop floor level. In all cases whenever a rally is called, workers on the job need to be called out, despite the legal consequences. At the shop floor and workplace level, democratic local committees should be

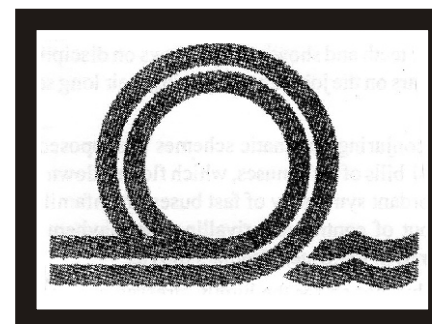




set up to discuss the next moves, to relay concerns and opinions to the various union leaderships and to build solidarity. Workers in each workplace best know what the local issues are. If no one is listening, pressure should be applied. In the past EBA's have been rather undemocratic affairs with union members at shop floor level mystified by the process and only learning about what is to be served up when the vote is to take place. There is power in the union, however the only real power resides in the collective action of workers, not the bureaucrats in head office. Appeals by the bureaucrats in the union head office calling on political favours really does not advance the union movement or the lives of workers.

Real power exists when we the workers have some control over the processes and actions affecting our lives. The attacks on wages and conditions can be expected to continue. Ready yourself and your work colleagues by preparing to work together and accepting nothing less than you need. Now is the right time to launch a campaign. As businesses reopen after the pandemic induced shut downs and people return to work it will be critical to any recovery that industrial disputation is kept under wraps. That gives us a huge advantage at this time because the bosses just want things to run smoothly after the disruptions to business. You know what to do. NO WAGE CUTS!

Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win.



## Warning SATIRE: The Gladysator & The Fall of the NSW Inc. Empire

Gladys Berejiklian Premier of NSW woke up on the morning of Monday 2/7/21. Looking into her bedroom mirror, she admired her diamond wedding ring inscribed with her husband Daryl's name, new head dress hat, armoured bra and corset. She mumbled to herself how she had to get evermore money to fund her Liberal Govt. empire. A constant wave of corruption scandals was threatening it's bulwarks and financing. The whole pack of cards was facing collapse. It had become like Hill Billy Dictator Bjokey Petersen's Qld Govt. in the 1980's. When on its last legs. She caught her chariot ministerial chauffeur driven limo and headed off to the bear pit.

On the way she received on her mobile an anguished call from the tycoon James Packer. His Crown Casino in waiting venture and a range of other businesses were facing severe financial crises and bankruptcy. The ICAC Inquiry into Corruption associated with Crown Casino had done terrible damage. He spoke darkly of having to take the big plunge from the top floor of Crown Casino. As another trip to a rehab hospital would not fix the problem due to its severity. He warned his laundry bags of cash for the Libs could halt and others in the industry would follow suit, if his financial solvency problems were not solved. He demanded that Gladys come to his rescue.

Gladys anxiously agreed to organise an urgent meeting of NSW Inc. to organise a bailout. It was to be held at 10am Monday 9th July 2021 in the Corporate Suite on the top floor of Crown Casino at Barangaroo. She did an urgent ring around to her Lib Govt. Centurions such as NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro, Treasurer and Head of ICARE Not, Dominic Perrottet, Minister for Transport and Roadside Tree Stumps, Andrew Constance, Health Minister Brad Hazzard and the rest were contacted. She then got on to various NSW Inc. heavy weights, the CEO's of the Business Council of Australia, Sydney Chamber of Commerce, Lend Lease, Macquarie Bank, Harry Finger on the Trigger of Meritons, the CEO's of Sydney and NSW Trains, the STA, Transit Systems and Mark Morey of Unions NSW and various key union bosses.

She caught Alex Claassens, NSW Secretary of the RTBU, at a union executive meeting. He had been modelling the new official RTBU uniform. He had been triumphantly walking



down a bizarre hastily constructed cat walk in the union HQ conference room. Followed like a shadow by the new legal officer furiously waving a fan as the air conditioning was down. As part of the green fields enterprise agreement for union staff, the legal officer has been multi-tasked. Alex quipped to the executive dramatically pointing to the legal officer, "he thought he'd bludge in the job. Just bamboozling the grass roots with legal lingo from taking direct action. Look! I'm wringing some real work out of him now!"

The union executive sat in rapt silence! You could have heard a pin drop! They were enthralled by the grandeur of the new uniform. Dazzled by the solid gold buttons, blue sapphire studded gold cuff links inscribed with the RTBU logo, white

silk gloves and luxurious cashmere jacket.

However one brave spoilt sport suddenly yelled out. "Alex that uniform is ostentatious! Why aren't you spending union dues to help improve members wages and conditions? Why aren't you helping out ex-STA drivers in Region 6 like at Leichhardt depot having massive wage cuts and interurban guards facing wage cuts and the sack after transfer to customer service with your bogus safety report written by a corporate insider?" Claassens was stunned by the outrageous interjection which spoilt his magic moment. He replied unctuously, "His members had become public spirited, patriotic, wanted to make Australia great and realised we were all in this together. They understood the obvious need for belt tightening and a trip to the very long dole queue these days for some. His members also realised the importance of raising the prestige and profile of professional union leaders like himself, with glamorous uniforms."

Suddenly Bus Division Sec. David Babineau interrupted, telling him, "His old flame, Gladys Berejiklian was on his mobile" brandishing the phone. Smartly Claassens took the call. He mentioned he was absolutely delighted to help out such an outstanding entrepreneur as James Packer. Unlike undeserving ex-STA drivers and train crew. He recognised Packer's high business ethics and like himself "always obeyed the law of the land". He and Babineau would definitely attend. Gladys then reached Richard Olsen NSW TWU Sec. He mentioned he might make it. She then rang other union officials.

At 10 am 9th July, Andrew Constance was about to enter the Crown Casino complex for the conference, when he was surprised to see a big crowd of CEO's milling outside. Richard Olsen of the TWU and his henchmen had set up a sausage sizzle, marquee tent and the TWU banner "TWU Driving Privatisation in NSW" on the side walk outside. The TWU Choir and Corporate Union Big Band were just arriving to serenade the high end of town with the old

Abba hit "It's a Rich Man's World!". Olsen was engrossed handing out flyers advertising TWU tacky wares and chatting up the corporate high rollers, spiced with snazzy little corporate jingles: "TWU: Bringing you lower wages and conditions every day!, TWU: Let us do it for you! And TWU: The fresh cheaper workers people!" Constance couldn't believe his eyes. He went ballistic, accusing Olsen of crass marketing. He emphasised "that we were there to help out a deserving corporate identity like Packer in a spot of bother". Olsen had his henchmen rapidly pack up the TWU Fete.

Next to arrive was Alex Claassens from the RTBU in his sedan chair. David Babineau of the Bus Division, as a rookie official had to thumb a lift with the 'big fella', and go on piggy back. The vintage vehicle was powered by a team of loco reps. They held Alex in reverence, considering his near saintly status with his famous quote "always obeying the law of the land". However they did notice on occasion a devilish glare in his eyes such as at EBA and Election time and of course in early 2017 with the secret Memorandum of Understanding on Driver Only Operation on the new interurbans and bodgied up consultation/approval with the meeting attendance sheets. Today they were performing a labour of love. It was on their day off. They had no thought of wages, O/T, meal allowances, penalty rates or loadings, but they did have an eye for room at the top.

As they reached the venue, they were groaning frightfully, bathed in sweat and collapsed, exhausted under the weight of union bureaucracy. They would all be requiring spinal reconstructions and plenty of sickies. A Frantic Constance rushed over with a bucket of water to revive them. They had become the apple of his eye with their role in facilitating DOO from Interurban to intra-urban trains.

In the formation of a Roman Legion Column, Gladys' Lib Ministerial Centurions all attired in bullet proof armoured vests marched into the conference room in the corporate suite. They were all yelling "Hail Gladys!" as they passed her and clicking their jack boot heels. The conference was opened by Gladys. She had just finished welcoming guest of honour James Packer, her Centurions and assorted Corporate heavy weights from NSW Inc., when she was rudely interrupted. Constance suddenly quipped sarcastically "Are we here Gladys to help bail out you and Darryl after you're heavy fluttering at the roulette tables in Monte Carlo on your honeymoon?" Gladys went ballistic over the interjection, sending Constance cowering under his seat with the threat of a Cabinet reshuffle and loss of his portfolio.

Gladys proceeded to outline the illustrious entrepreneurial lineage of James. Sketched in coded language, his current financial peccadillo. She expressed great concern, that unless \$10 Billion was raised to bail out Packer's empire and the ICAC Investigation halted, the flow-on effects would bring down the NSW Libs and the NSW economy. "We are all in this together!" she announced. She continued, "I'm sure we would all be horrified if James had to relocate residence to Matthew Talbot Mansions in Woolloomooloo, sell Big Issue outside the Crown Casino entrance and put the hard word on passing Chinese Whales and former business associates for a spare Billion dollars." She concluded, "My Govt. has established a bailout fund for James. Please supply fund raising suggestions."

Lib Centurion Brad Hazzard, Health Minister was first off the rank. He proposed rapid privatisation of all public hospitals. The favoured tenderer could be encouraged to make a few millions donation to the fund. Nurses Union boss, Brett Holmes expressed liking for the idea. According to Brett, "the idea made obvious business sense and would help James." Another Lib Centurion, Dominic Perrottet, Treasurer suggested an extension to \$100,000





for the new gambling card with a surcharge for the fund.

Alex from RTBU, burst into the fray. He recalled the depression of the 1930's which had 10% wage cuts. "Why not now?" He announced. He advised, his members while disgruntled over the NSW Public Sector Wage Freeze had coped. There certainly has been no direct action by them over it. So they would easily accommodate a further 10% wage cut. "I could easily slip it in the new agreement on DOO. My new legal officer could draft up a relevant clause in fine print. No need to even show it to members," he announced.

David Babineau from the Bus Division, desperate to show as a rookie, he had the right stuff, suddenly intervened. He

stated, "that he thought the 10% wage cut idea was great. He had not heard a peep from his members about the Wage Freeze, massive wage cuts to ex-STA drivers in Region 6 Transit Systems and they were so easily taken in by the fraudulent talk of a 48 hour strike over STA privatisation and of course they fell for the old trick he learnt from Alex, of holding a stop work staff meeting rather than a stop work union mass meeting. To head off any grass roots push for industrial action."

Olsen from the TWU, suddenly jumped in. He proposed a 15% wage cut. His members were rugged individualists and could easily cope with it. His suggestion met rapturous applause from the audience, except Alex and David of course. Gladys yelled, "Richard your my best friend for ever! If I wasn't already hitched to Darryl, I'd marry you!"

Several months after the conference, a corporate white knight from the US rescued the 'damsel' of James Packer's empire with a massive capital influx, saving Packer's bacon. Many billions had been raised for the fund and had been diverted to unsavoury rorts. Gladys had syphoned off \$100's of millions for the construction of a massive 'Forum' mansion and estate in the countryside of NSW. Billions were diverted to the NSW and Federal Libs re-election funds.

Details of the massive rorts were leaked to media outlets. Investigative journalists produced major exposes with massive lurid headlines in the media. Like all empires the NSW Inc. empire finally collapsed. With anger spreading amongst workers and others, a wave of strikes broke out and mass demonstrations occurred outside the NSW Parliament and Gladys 'Forum' mansion. The massive crowds stormed Parliament and the mansion breaking through its high walls. Bringing down Gladys's Govt. and NSW Inc. Gladys and Darryl had to escape in a helicopter which landed on the helipad on top of her mansion and escaped to New Zealand to live in exile.

## SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

### Leichhardt Depot News

#### Sparks: What is the latest at the depot?

Leichhardt Busie: In December last year heaps more ex-STA drivers were displaced from their rosters. They were replaced with the new cheaper drivers who are often TWU members. In the case of the early AM's, the bosses pay ex-STA drivers of the RTBU EBA (enterprise agreement) extra for the period 4am to 7am. So they will be putting the new cheaper drivers on this roster, so the bosses save more money. In the case of some ex-STA drivers who have been displaced from their previous rosters, they have faced massive wage cuts as much as between \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year.

Another new attack by the bosses on the ex-STA drivers is the installation of an IPOD like device in the driver's cabin for so-called safety reasons. This device causes glare and can be quite distracting when on the routes. However if you touch it in transit, the bosses have you called up over it. It's all about another measure to drive the ex-STA drivers off the job and replace them with the cheaper new drivers.

An important reason for this intensified efficiency drive by the Transit Systems bosses is the merger a while back between Transit Systems and SeaLink. Associated with this merger would be increased pressure on management by shareholders for increased profits and dividends. The privatisation of the STA should never have been allowed to go ahead.

### Waverley Depot News

#### Sparks: What are the latest developments with privatisation of the STA?

Waverley Busie: Latest news is that the timetable for privatisation is shaping up as the following: Ryde and Willoughby to be sold off at the end of the year. With Waverley, Pt. Botany, Randwick and the Eastern Suburbs Light Rail to follow as a package at the beginning of 2022. While the remaining Northern depots will be sold off at the end of 2022. There remains a continuing shortage of drivers. Only a few new drivers are coming on the job. You see them around on the road as they don't wear the uniform. There is plenty of overtime. The intention of the STA bosses is to help out the profit-making of the new operator. When they takeover they can save money by putting on the cheaper new drivers. On the long weekend in June this year a new weekend roster is being introduced and bus services from the depot are being more aligned with helping link up with the Light Rail. The depot remains a very mean and lean place. Morale of drivers has greatly declined. There is a sense of despair amongst many. It's a great shame to see how a once proud organisation and supplier of bus services has deteriorated.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the continuing rivalry between the RTBU and**



#### **TWU since the privatisation of Region 6.**

WB: Many of us are angry about the TWU trying to muscle in and divide us in the interests of the bosses. It's weakening RTBU members on the job and undermining grass roots cooperation in the struggle against the bosses. Considerable amounts of RTBU funds and personnel are being wasted in countering the TWU inroads in the STA and Region 6 of Transit Systems.

#### **Sparks: What are your impressions of the latest antics of Transport Minister Constance?**

WB: His latest stunt was an order he issued to his Department to chop down all vegetation 40 metres each side along state highways using the excuse of a bush fire safety measure. It would result in the loss of millions of trees and cause great damage to ecological systems and native animals. Fortunately a senior bureaucrat, Rod Staples in his Department refused to pass on the order. When his mutiny was discovered Staples was forced off the job and took a severance payment of \$800,000 plus. This decision is unbelievable. No other country or organisation in the world would try a stunt like this. It just goes to show we have a Donald Trump clone as Transport Minister. It illustrates how chaotic and out of control the Berejiklian Govt. has become. Its showing signs of desperation.

#### **Sparks: What are expansion of tollways and ex your impressions of the Berejiklian Govt's vast pressways?**

WB: I recently took a drive along the M8 and M5 for a short trip and had the unpleasant discovery of being billed \$36 nearly \$40 for the short trip. Using the tollways may just save you 8 to 12 minutes of a trip on normal roads. Truckies are now being compelled to use the tollways in their trips into the City and are being charged \$100 each way. Amounting to

close to \$6,000 per annum. There seems to be a conflict of interest in regard to these toll ways/express ways, with the Government favouring its business mates with contracts.

#### **Sparks: What are your thoughts on the scandal plagued housing and construction industry in the NSW under the Liberal Government?**

WB: A recent TV program revealed an enormous scandal. It involved new housing developments in the far Western Suburbs in the Penrith area. Due to close housing and lack of trees/green spaces, by 2030 these developments will be uninhabitable with rising temperatures associated with global warming. While the NSW Govt. remains very slack in regard to the repair of faults in housing to be sold. Allowing much leeway for the cover-up of much shoddy and faulty work. In contrast to other states such as Qld which has much stricter inspection of housing for sale.

### **Burwood Depot News**

#### **Sparks: What have been the ramifications of new route changes for the depot?**

Burwood Driver: One of the most significant changes was the introduction of the 461X and 461N to replace the 461. For the 461X and other routes a new stop has been introduced at Eddy Avenue to link up with the Light Rail stop there. Its causing considerable traffic congestion affecting our running times. In the evening when drivers are coming out of the city you have only 3-4-5 passengers in the evenings. Prior to the changes drivers often had 30 or so passengers. Maybe one reason for the drop in passengers is the fear some have of contracting the COVID-19 virus if they use public transport. There is a great anger building up amongst particularly elderly passengers over the limited stops of the operation of the new routes. You often see passengers trying to flag us down on the prior 461 route, but we are unable to stop for them now. In the Burwood area there are moves a foot amongst passengers to launch a petition to the NSW Govt. to stop the limited stops operation. A similar problem exists with the X438 Abbotsford run. The elimination of the Parramatta Road and Norton Street Stop on outward journeys is very inconvenient!

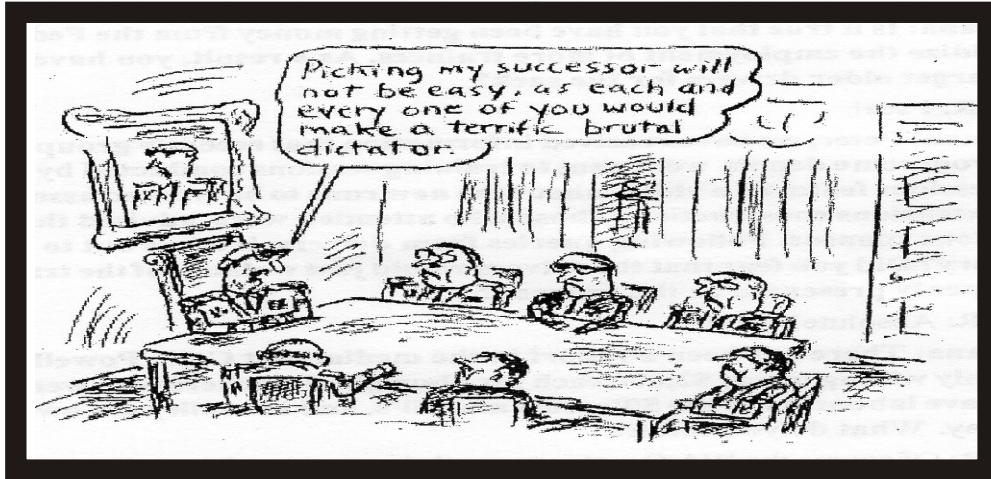
#### **Sparks: What are other changes?**

BD: There was going to be major changes with the work of the BOT's (Driver Instructors). However I have noticed no changes. They are just doing their normal work. However now they are not based at one depot. They are working between different depots.

#### **Sparks: What is the latest with the union and the privatisation of the STA?**

BD: The RTBU officials are now talking about starting negotiations shortly with Transit Systems for a new EBA (Enterprise Agreement) for all drivers in Region 6 not just ex-STA drivers. Its rumoured that at Ryde depot, Transit Systems has been conducting orientation courses for drivers prior to its privatisation. There is currently little mingling of drivers from different depots and we are receiving little information from management and the union officials.





## SYDNEY FERRIES NEWS

### Sparks: What are the latest developments in the Ferries?

Ferry Worker: The most important news involves the replacement of the iconic Freshwater Class Ferries with smaller and faster Emerald Class built in Indonesia. Despite the Freshwater Class ferries having a further 20 years working life. The hidden agenda of the NSW Govt., and TransDev the new operator, is the reduction of Ferry crew staffing levels from 8 on the Freshwater Class to 3 on the Emerald Class. As the new boats are smaller, passengers are likely to be crammed in like sardines without adequate seating. Typically the officials of the Maritime Section of the CFMEU have dampened down any push for industrial action to save our jobs. They say passengers won't support industrial action and want faster ferries. Only tourists are likely to support our action. With the COVID-19 outbreak there has been a major decline in overseas tourists.

Latest news is that a delay has occurred in the introduction of the new ferries until next year due to safety issues. Five of the six Emerald Class ferries have been found to have corrosion and evidence of seawater entering the hulls of three of the boats. The union officials are claiming a victory as the Govt. and the new operator have agreed to retain two of the Freshwater Class, but just for weekend jaunts for tourists. The remaining two will be sunk for divers.

The public on-line petition to retain the Freshwater Class Ferries has reached over 20,000 signatures!

## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

**In this issue of Sparks, Drivers, Conductors and other V/Line employees will discuss issues of corruption, lagging in of fellow employees and other issues at V/Line. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.**

### Sparks: What is the current situation at V/Line?

Moose: The Chief Executive of V/Line was sacked over a cleaning contract. As of January 2021, no new Chief Executive has been appointed. In the interim an acting Chief Executive has been appointed.

Rastus: A new cleaning contractor has been appointed. He took over almost the next day. The cleaning should be brought back in house.

Roscoe: V/Line won't do that. The train maintenance should also be taken back by V/Line.

Forsyth: The previous Chief Executive brought some of his mates over from Metro Trains and placed them into managerial positions. V/Line employees were wondering whether this was to be a prelude to privatisation.

Penelope: It wouldn't surprise us if these managers are leaking information to some transport companies. Older employees will remember back in 1999 when a manager was made to leave after he was caught giving information to one of the companies which was bidding for V/Line.

Archie: Human Resources should be investigated by IBAC to see if there is corruption. Long serving employees have been passed over for promotion while some manager puts one of his mates into the position.

Abner: It is rumoured that this has happened at a Country Location.

Sheona: We do know that a few employees contacted IBAC over some positions but we have not heard anything.

Roscoe: But do know that a witch hunt will be conducted to see who contacted the Corruption Commission.

### Sparks: What is the situation with COVID-19?

Abner: The Albury line resumed normal service in early December and that On Train Catering is to resume on all V/Line services which had On Train Catering at the end of January.

Forsyth: The situation with the Albury Line is due to the COVID outbreak in NSW, the XPT is suspended south of Albury due to Border closures but the V/Line train is still operating.

Penelope: Passengers on the V/Line train for Canberra are de-trained at Wodonga. The Canberra/Link has run as a sealed service not picking up or setting down passengers in NSW. The Canberra and Batemans Bay service from Bairnsdale is suspended from the NSW border.

Abner: Masks are compulsory. V/Line issued masks were found to be uncomfortable. The RTBU provided masks which are comfortable for employees when wearing them. The masks have the RTBU logo on them.

Sparks: What happened?

Archie: V/Line put out a notice saying masks with logos are not allowed to be worn. So any masks with logos have to be worn inside out.

Rastus: What a joke! The logo on the mask is a union badge and the Arbitration Commission ruled in 1912 that you can wear a union badge while on duty.

Roscoe: Perhaps V/line is upset over the TV show Great Australian Rail Journeys. In the episode on Metro Trains, Michael Portillo visits Metro and most of the employees are wearing RTBU jumpers.

Sheona: The show went on TV around the world.

Rastus: Some employees are wearing the masks in defiance of V/Line.

Archie: I will certainly will continue to wear mine.

Rastus: If any supervisor tells me to remove my mask I will remind them if you touch one employee you touch all!

#### **Sparks: Are conductors checking tickets on the trains?**

Abner: A notice was issued telling conductors to resume ticket checking.

Penelope: But there is a problem. Management has instructed conductors not to instruct passengers not wearing masks to wear a mask. It is unsafe so some conductors are not checking tickets. It is an OH&S issue. Management want to avoid conflict.

Archie: Management should put PSO's and AO's on the trains as back up to the conductors.

#### **Sparks: Is lagging on work mates continuing?**

Moose: It has gotten worse over the last twelve months.

Forsyth: Employees have been stood down and some have been forced to resign due to having been reported for trivial issues.

Rastus and Roscoe: Drivers have a name for lagggers. The name is power prince and power princess depending what sex the employee is.

Sheona: As we have said in previous issues, management is encouraging employees to dob in fellow employees. These lagggers think that by dobbing in employees they will get a promotion. What these people don't realise is they are being used by management.

Forsyth: Most of these lagggers are not members of the union hoping for promotion which will not happen.

#### **Sparks: What about the conductor who was injured in the taxi on the way to Ballarat?**

Sheona: She is still on light duties.

Moose: The opinion of the majority of employees at Southern Cross is if she is unable to resume work as a conductor then retrain her for another position. Do not leave her on the scrap heap. Remember it was the incompetence of a manager that caused this problem. Employees have told this manager what they think.

#### **Sparks: What about a Christmas Present?**

Rastus: The answer is NO!

Penelope: Over the last twelve months employees have risked their lives to operate trains during LOCKDOWNS and to get a letter from V/line saying there will be no Christmas Presents is a kick in the guts.

Moose: Some managers using some of their budget put on, subject to COVID restrictions, a small Christmas Party but some did not.

**Sparks: Once again we have run out of Space. Lagging workmates has become a problem in the Rail, Tram and Bus industry over the last couple of years. It needs to stamped out.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In concluding V/Line has kicked its employees in the guts by providing no Christmas Presents. As for these power princes and princesses, we drivers have a word for you lagggers. Get out of the transport industry. There is no room for your type. Finally wear your union issued mask and be proud of the union logo.

## **Privatisation of Public Transport in Victoria (Tram & Bus)**

**In this edition of Sparks we will continue our article on Bus Privatisation in Victoria. Railway, Tramway and Bus workers will discuss these issues. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.**

Roscoe: There was a mistake in the last issue we would like to correct. It is the issue of Private Tramways in NSW. Under an Act of Parliament passed in the 1880's private companies can build and operate tramways on a thirty years franchise which after thirty years the Tramways reverts to Government operation. This happened to the line in Rockdale in 1915 when it was acquired by the Government. The Tramway at Parramatta was closed in 1963 with no replacement bus service. It is this legislation updated that was used to construct the Sydney Light Rail.

#### **Sparks: What was the situation in Victoria in 1980?**

Rastus: Most of the Bus Transport in Melbourne was provided by Private Bus operations. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board operated bus routes that operated over former Cobb Tram routes plus the areas of Footscray, Sunshine, Heidelberg and Doncaster.

Roscoe: The Victorian Railways operated three Bus Routes. They were Sandringham, Beaumaris and Southland, East Camberwell-East Kew which replaced a train line and Wangaratta to Mount Buffalo Chalet. Rail replacement services after 1976 in Country Victoria were operated by private operators under contract to the Victorian Railways.

Rastus: Both the Victorian Railways and the MMTB would operate Buses under legislation passed in the 1920's.

Cloe: Despite comments from a Bus Magazine the V.R. and MMTB had to apply to operate the routes. This happened in Doncaster in 1961 when the MMTB acquired Wickers Transport.

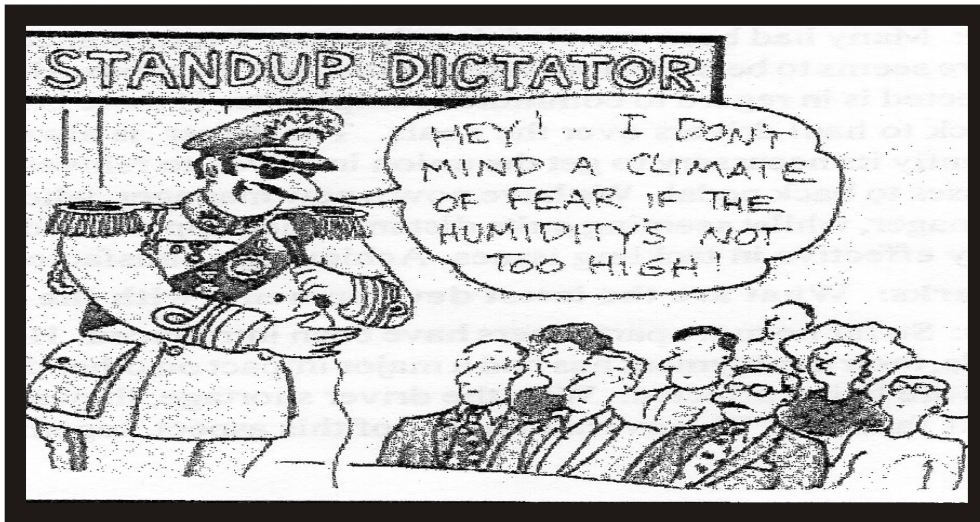
#### **Sparks: What Union covered the Bus Workers?**

Clyde: The private bus workers were covered by the Motor Chauffeurs Union. This Union was a Right Wing Union whose then Secretary was a DLP(Democratic Labor Party) candidate in parliamentary elections on a number of occasions. Private Bus Drivers worked under basic working conditions. There were no penalty rates in the Private Bus Industry until the late 1950's. This Union also covered Victorian Railway Drivers at Dupilene depot. Sandringham Drivers were covered by the ARU. The Tramway Bus Drivers were covered by the AT and MOEA (Tramway Union).

Taylor: The TWU only covered Interstate Bus Drivers and Drivers who worked for the Airline Companies. They also covered Drivers at Ansett Roadways. The TWU tried to obtain coverage of Private Bus Drivers but lost in the Courts.

Clyde: Due to the weakness of the Motor Chauffeurs Union and some Bus Drivers working for private bus operators who were not unionised, a number of Bus Drivers at various Bus





Companies joined the AT and MOEA.

Taylor: All hell broke loose. Bus companies and the Motor Chauffeurs Union which was to merge with the TWU went to the Federal Court which ruled that in Victoria the Tramway Union could not cover Drivers in the Private Bus Industry.

Clyde: At the same time as this happened in 1984 Jeff Kennett who was the Leader of the Opposition wanted to put the MMTB Bus Routes which were now operated by the MTA who succeeded the Tramways Board out to Competitive Tender.

Roscoe: The Victorian Railways Bus Routes were not affected as they were covered by the ARU. But in 1989 the East Kew Bus service was closed. Some of the residents said this was illegal as it was officially a tram service. The closure went ahead.

Clyde: In 1988 some Private Bus Routes in Melbourne's Eastern Suburbs were put out to tender. The Bus Industry argued none of their members could tender for the runs with the services remaining with the existing operator.

Taylor: One Bus Company who operated Charter Buses won the contract. One of the companies who lost the contract went to the Supreme Court. The argument was that as they lost the tender, Goodwill had to be paid.

Clyde: The Court agreed with the bus company and to this day with the exception of former MMTB Bus Routes and SMART Bus Route, no Private Bus Route which is owned by a bus Operator can go out to tender. The only way they can be removed is if its shut down because of withdrawal of subsidy.

**Sparks: When were the MTA now PTC Buses privatised?**

Rastus: In January 1993 after Kennett won office, it was rumoured that all PTC Bus routes were to be tendered. The PTC was not allowed to put in a tender.

Roscoe: Unknown to the Rail Unions (before Union Mergers) the Tramway Union Secretary made a deal with the Minister of Transport in late January 1993. In return for the elimination of Tram Conductors all Tram Routes would remain and the PTC could tender for the routes.

Rastus: This agreement the Tramway Union made with the Kennett Government has caused a

fair amount of ill feeling which lasts to this day.

Taylor: In August 1993 the results of the tender were announced. Two thirds of the PTC Bus Routes went to a Sydney Operator named WESTBUS which was owned by the BOSANJAK family.

Clyde: The remainder of the PTC routes plus the Railway Bus routes at Sandringham were retained by the PTC trading as METBUS which operated in the Footscray, Sunshine, Brighton and Sandringham area.

Taylor: It was obvious the Kennett Government did not want Victorian Bus Companies tendering for routes.

Rastus: METBUS operated for a number of years. However due to Privatisation of Public Transport in Victoria in 1998, the tender was won by Dysons who tendered as Melbourne Bus Link.

Roscoe: Bus Drivers both in 1993 and 1998 were given the option to return to Tram Driving. Some Drivers took redundancy or early retirement. Drivers who transferred to the new operators were given a transition payment of up to \$10,000 depending on years of service.

Clyde: Due to family issues BOSANJAK sold NATIONAL BUS COMPANY (trading name) to English owned National Express. This company in pulling out of Rail and Tram Franchises, sold the contract to a Melbourne Bus Operator VENTURA in 2003.

Taylor: The situation in 2010 was both former PTC routes were franchised to DYSONS and VENTURA. The Liberals won office in 2010 and announced the PTC routes were to go out to Worldwide tender.

Clyde: The contract was taken over by TRANSDEV. Dysons did not put in a tender as the tender was for all PTC routes. VENTURA lost the tender.

Taylor: The service has deteriorated and in 2016 some of TRANSDEV's buses were put off the road for being non-roadworthy. This is another story for a future issue of Sparks as we have run out of space.

## MAY 21 #CLIMATESTRIKE

**School Strike 4 Climate Australia was started in October 2018 by three teenagers from Castlemaine, inspired by Greta Thunberg's weekly strikes outside Swedish Parliament. Since then, we have grown into one of the biggest movements in Australian history. 350,000+Students and Adults 8 States & Territories 600+Locations**

**Contact: INFO@SCHOOLSTRIKE4CLIMATE.COM  
PH. 0401989422**

## INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS NEWS

### BRITISH BUS NEWS

**Bus drivers working for London United, owned by the French firm RATP, went out on a 48 hour strike on March 31st through to end of April 1st after talks broke down over pay and conditions. RATP are attempting to use the pandemic to attack workers' pay and conditions, despite continuing to make large profits.** Further strikes are planned for April 7th and 14th. London United is attempting to downgrade drivers, which means a loss of as much as 2,000 pounds a year for some drivers. They would no longer get paid during breaks or time spent waiting for their bus to arrive after clocking in. Five bus depots came out, Fulwell, Hounslow, Park Royal, Shepherd's Bush and Tolworth. In the meantime, drivers at the Stamford Brook and Hounslow Heath garages have also voted to come out on strike. This means that all seven depots will be out on strike on the 14th.

Meanwhile, at other London bus companies, London Sovereign and Quality Line, also owned by RATP, the Unite union demobilised the struggle. Many workers, up to a third of the workforce, voted against accepting a pay increase of 1.25 per cent and a one-off payment of £500, only 0.5% greater than what was originally offered. They had been involved in a series of rolling strikes since February. But the planned strikes were suspended by Unite in March. Quality Line drivers are the lowest paid in London. The paltry pay offer means an increase of 14p extra an hour. The workers there are paid 2.50 pounds less than at RATP's other firms. The New Starter contracts proposed by RATP will still go ahead. This means new drivers will get lower pay and conditions than established drivers. Neither will RATP back down on zero hour contracts for drivers on lines lost to competing bus companies, who were then transferred to other bus routes. Bus workers are in crying need of developing rank and file committees to organise action against union sell-outs.

[Tps://londonacg.blogspot.com/2021/04/london-bus-drivers-have-had-enough.html](https://londonacg.blogspot.com/2021/04/london-bus-drivers-have-had-enough.html)

### NZ BUS STRIKE!

**Bus drivers in Wellington, New Zealand are on strike for better wages and conditions.**

Today 22/4/21 bus drivers in Wellington, New Zealand are going on strike. How did this come about? The problem originates in the fact that two years ago a private equity firm named Next Capital Investments (NCI) bought Wellington's bus service, NZ Bus. A year ago pay negotiations with the 280 people who drive the buses became deadlocked. Things have reached the point where the drivers' collective agreement has expired. An offer from the Greater Wellington Regional Council to NCI to bring the drivers' wages up from a base rate of \$19.40 an hour to the level of the so-called Living Wage (\$22.10) was rejected. Rather, the company wants to press ahead with plans to cut wages and conditions. For example, moving the Wellington drivers to a collective agreement similar to its Auckland drivers, which has a higher base rate but lower penal rates and one week less annual leave. With this as a background, on April 14th angry Tramways Union members voted 204-2 in a secret ballot to take today's action.

The wider contemporary environment is one where Labour and National politicians have

## WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC UNIONISM?

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:

That no person employed by the union should earn more than the average income of the membership.

1. The Spokespeople should have no executive power all decisions should be made by the union membership in the course of mass meetings.

2. The Spokespeople have no executive power all decisions should be made by the union membership in 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.

7. All loss of earnings incurred by elected delegates who miss work as a result of carrying out union duties will be reimbursed by the union to the extent of the lost wages.

Only in this way will we see the creation of a democratic, united, fighting organisation which can stand up for the rights of workers and their families against unhelpful union officials, bosses, political parties and governments.

created a framework (through legislation such as the Employment Relations Act) that makes it difficult for workers to mount effective legal action against the boss class. So while the drivers' action is a severely limited and defensive one, in this context it should be supported. It highlights the basic and powerful reality that it is the labour of working people that make this society function. Nothing can move unless we collectively make it happen and a small minority of self-appointed dictators such as the private owners of NCI are incapable of stopping this.

The Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) is a small organisation with limited resources but as our name suggests, we wish to extend our solidarity and moral support to our fellow workers among the Wellington bus drivers. We call on all those who sell their labour in this society to use whatever creative means you can to also offer support to them. Victory to the Drivers! An Injury to One is an Injury to All!

<https://awsm.nz/?p=9945>



















