

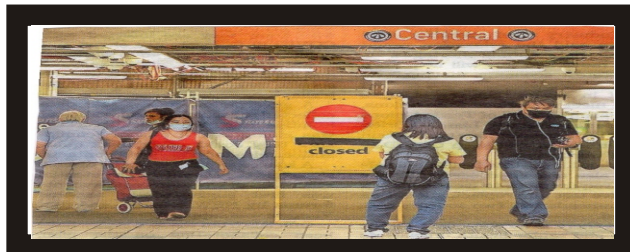
No. 170

APRIL - MAY 2022

Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**Hero Claassens screams Safety to Media.
Meanwhile pushes New Interurbans designed
for unsafe DOO and Privatisation!
Follow up defeat of Rail Lockout with grass
roots committees to win the 'real' demands!
Demand Full EBA Doc. 4 weeks before Rigged
Ballot! Eastern Subs Bus Cave-in shows they can't
be trusted!**



NSW Railway News P.3;
Eastern Subs. Bus Cuts P.18;
Vic. Rail News P. 24;
LETTER P.10

Sydney Rail Lockout P.7;
Sydney Buses News P.19;
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Unbelievable! 20% pa pay rise for Claassens! P.13

EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

The Rail EBA Campaign: A Treacherous Comedy of Errors!

Some of the most important news has been the continuing saga of the RTBU's Sydney Trains and NSW Trains EBA campaign. Since commencement in the depths of the COVID-19 lock down last year, it has been pursued in a half hearted and lame duck fashion such as an ineffectual late night 'strike' and strikes partially sabotaged as only 'foreign made' trains not allowed to run, etc. All designed to exhaust the grass roots so as to cave-in on major nasties in the final EBA document. The latest development has been a threat of industrial action to provide free fare days for commuters as compensation for the inconvenience of the Sydney rail lockout on 21/2/22.(See article page 7.) This latest of these stupid games will not move the struggle forward. Basically the union is trading public opinion for not undertaking industrial action. Where is the EBA in this? This will delay the EBA even longer and simultaneously reduce disputation. Its vitally important to establish grass roots committees to take over the running of the campaign, achieve the 'real' demands and take advantage of the defeat of the rail lockout.

Delaying the EBA campaign and negotiations would be in line with the officials likely plans for having the ballot in Sept. to provide a fake pay rise and possibly a bonus 'bribe' before elections in Nov.-Dec. Likely to be the last elections for important positions with talk of a merger with the TWU and adopting its 'collegiate' electoral system where the rank and file are not allowed to vote for important positions. Its critical to demand the full EBA doc at least four weeks before the ballot for consideration and mount major pressure for it. Given likely severe nasties such as DOO(Driver Only Operation) and the gates opened to privatisation in the EBA. As occurred with the 2018 EBA the officials are likely to only provide a summary of some highlights without the nefarious fine print. Even with the achievement of the 3.5% pa pay rise, there would be no real pay rise given reductions due to legislated super increases, spiralling inflation contributed by the Ukraine Crisis/War. (See article page 3.)

New Union Boss Sport not ready as yet for the Olympics! Throwing STA Drivers Under the Bus!

Some of the most important news in Sydney Buses has been the massive bus routes cuts in the Eastern Suburbs in early December last year. In this edition we throw new

See page 11.

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

Observations and Reflections on 2 Leaderships

by Crimson Coconut

There is upheaval in N.S.W. which impacts greatly on public transport and its workforce. While Gladys Berejiklian has resigned over allegations of misuse of public money and “pork barrelling”, her horrid legacy lives on in NSW, especially in public transport. Despite resigning and not performing any work and not attending any ministerial meetings, she is still collecting her \$14,000 a week salary. Her retired ministers, including the former Transport Minister, are also still collecting their pay packets. (Source SMH)

At the same time a new E.B.A. is being sought for rail workers bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 Pandemic. However negotiations have stalled to the point where the government who have been offering a paltry 0.3% P.A. pay rise for employees is failing to meet with the rail unions. Gladys was N.S.W. Transport Minister for nearly four years, finally relinquishing the title fittingly on April Fools Day 2015 to become Premier of N.S.W. In her time at the Transport helm she decimated the workforce and privatised everything within sight. Overall she has overseen a dramatic fall in the overall workforce in the public transport sector. In some cases a few jobs were picked up by the private sector as the privatisation juggernaut rolled on. In the public rail industry job numbers in that sector fell from something over 30,000 when she first intervened to be at today's 11,000 (estimates only). Technology has taken up some of the jobs, however, areas such as the maintenance sector, have been taken by private contractors. Let's just have a look at a few of the negative changes that happened within public transport during Glad the Impalers reign.

* Outsourcing of Sydney's Buses and Newcastle buses on the most profitable routes with a promise to outsource the whole lot of the public bus services in NSW.

*Outsourcing of Sydney Ferries to a consortium of investment houses and banks.

*Wholesale cutting of jobs on rail stations saw the removal of full time workers and a shift to a greater proportion of part time and casual workers. Some of the most experienced operators in public transport were removed from their jobs and largely

replaced by inexperienced or less experienced workers. Some of the jobs that were removed included administration staff replaced by temps, Station Managers, all sorts of trades people, roster clerks and timekeepers, ticket sales persons, information staff, cleaners who were outsourced to cleaning companies, track maintenance inspectors, luggage room, communications, rail post office and many others.

*The privatisation of Sydney's Northwest rail line to form the Sydney Metro. Metro will eventually be rolled out as the Bankstown Line as a completely new rail service. The trains and services that run on these lines are not complementary to the existing Sydney Trains network and thus trains cannot be run from Metro on the Sydney Trains system and likewise Sydney's trains cannot run on the Metro system. I can't think of many cities in the world where a newly built rail system was incompatible with an existing and high volume rail system. \$Billions have been spent pulling down a fairly modern mass transport system and \$billions more have been spent rebuilding a system that will be run by a private consortium. This has been a developers dream because the rail corridor from Epping to Chatswood all the way to Bankstown will end up largely unrecognisable because of commercial acquisitions and development.

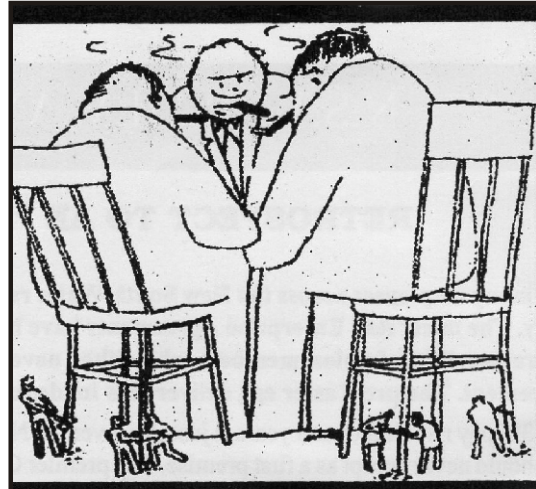
*Scrapping of the existence of the old maintenance facilities to create new Centres of Excellence and the outsourcing of many maintenance functions at the cost of \$billions.

* The purchase of new interurban trains overseas rather than having them built here in Australia/N.S.W. The latest acquisitions do not fit through the tunnels and bridges that were supposedly designed to run through. Other recently purchased trains are deemed to be unsafe in operation because they are designed to get rid of the job of the train guard. These trains, while in a trial process, have been banned from going into service before safety issues relating to work performed by guards have been addressed.

*Wage caps on employees in the public sector have kept transport workers' wages rises low and below the CPI. Enterprise Bargaining has been a long drawn out affair with those responsible from the government side stalling at every opportunity.

*To help balance the State Government budget by sleight of hand the Berejiklian Government set up the Transport Asset Holding Entity separate from NSW Transport. The latest C.E.O. of T.A.H.E., Benedict Colin, Group CEO from Keolis Downer, as well as having a position on the board of Infrastructure Australia is paid a reported

salary of \$575,000 per year.
 (S o u r c e S M H)
 Despite this wasteful and purely profit driven agenda by the Berejiklian Government and its disastrous effect on the workers within public transport very little has been seriously organised to combat the job losses, privatisation and the wasteful changes that have been evident over the last decade and a half . Public transport union density is one of the highest in the country.



Accurate figures for union density are hard to come by, however at an educated guess it would be well above 30% of the workforce as compared with a union density of around 14% in the general workforce. (ABS) It has been shown that the Union Secretary dining or having coffee with the now defunct Premier, Berijiklian, is not just a bad look, it achieves nothing. There is surely something amiss in the union office. For despite the march of Gladys and her wrecking ball of ministers through public transport nothing positive has been done to curtail the job losses or to even stop the cutting of services. While the union leadership was mainly silent during the pandemic I believe further measures should have been taken to ensure the safety of union members on the job. It took a while before management made masks for face to face workers mandatory. At the beginning of the pandemic no measures were taken by management to protect workers on the job. The unions decided to hand out their own face masks with the union logo printed on it rather than force the public transport entities to supply adequate PPE. A union membership vote on mandatory vaccination of staff could also have been useful to support the wishes of members and shore-up the unions statement about protecting all workers and commuters.

The latest EBA negotiations are instructive on the failures of halfhearted, half assed measures by the elected union leadership. I understand that there is a genuine attempt to build solidarity during the bargaining period, in which over 90% of union members voted to take protected action, but really are these the best and most effective tactics that the leadership can come up with? While there was a 4 hour rail strike on Tuesday the 28th of September, which was called a “stop work” meeting, it hardly had any effect on the transport network

because of the hours of the strike from 9am till 1pm. It did not hinder people getting to and from work, businesses or rail management. People working morning shifts could get to work before 9am and get home in the afternoon. Besides that, due to the pandemic, less than 10% of normal public transport commutes were taking place because of “stay at home” orders. The trains were largely empty each day anyway. The online stop-work meeting featured a series of speakers including one from the Nurses and Midwives Union and the usual cast from the union hierarchy. There were no real concrete industrial actions plans proposed except to keep the struggle going.

One disappointment was that the stop-work meeting, as usual, was a top down affair where ordinary union members were not able to have any input or say. I don't think that Zoom meetings are a suitable substitute for traditional stop-work meetings. However, when was the last time you attended a stop-work meeting? Other industrial action tactics are proving to be ineffective over time. I don't know who approved of these tactics but management must be laughing at them. Mostly they have proven ineffective in getting management to bargain “in good faith”. So far they are not offering more than the .03% pay rise for the first year. The union's claim is a 3.5% PA which is moderate considering that rail staff bore the brunt of the pandemic and were classed as an essential service. So where are we now? It seems that industrial action in its current form will continue. As we go to print an overtime ban and a cleaning ban of biological and toxic material is in force. This is not likely to cause too much consternation to the government or management as it possibly won't cause any staffing issues. An underutilised part time staff contingent, subcontracted workers and a partial overtime ban, plus creative overtime will mean t h a t t h i n g s w i l l s t i l l r u n s e a m l e s s l y .

Other tactics such as wearing union paraphernalia, sitting down on the job when not busy, not cleaning graffiti etc are comical rather than effective. The only thing that might move management is an indefinite strike. (stop work meetings should now be possible due to pandemic restrictions being lifted). The transport unions have been fiddling while the entities have been torn apart, restructured and jobs lost. Clearly the form of action used so far and contemplated in the future is not working. We have to get serious about what is needed. Leadership of these campaigns is lacking the guts to do what is really needed to win. You all know w h a t n e e d s t o b e d o n e .

The current union leadership have overseen all of the dastardly work of Gladys and her ministers and barely lifted a finger to stop it. Job losses, privatisation, outsourcing and public destruction have continued unabated and the union leadership we have seem incapable of organising a fightback. In late 2021, American workers, having formed rank and file organisations outside

of the old traditional yellow unions, have commenced an unprecedented industrial campaign across several industries. From Kellogs to John Deere, the agricultural machinery manufacturer, they are showing that walking out, picketing, showing no fear and building solidarity in a campaign of industrial disobedience can bring rewards. Concessions are being won and these grass roots movements are growing.

Withdrawal of labour is the only way forward. We can learn from these movements. At this stage we can't tell where future industrial campaigns will lead, but unless we act in unison and solidarity as the rank and file and insist on having a voice there will be more of the same defeats. The new Premier of N.S.W. is more pro-business than Gladys, if that is possible. He has less experience in the transport sector and has not been exposed to working with people in our industry. For that reason alone, things could take a turn for the worse. We need to organise on the job and be ready to take the action that is needed by building a base that is deeply rooted in the rank and file.

Workers Lock Out

While the Morrison National LNP Government pushes forward with their attempts at watering down workers' health and safety rights in the workplace the NSW Government is blocking Public Transport Unions attempts at keeping the public and transport workers safe. This is all part of a concerted attempt to bypass unions and allow management and contractors to openly flout health and safety laws.

In enterprise negotiations with the unions, the government and its representative managers are refusing to come to the table over safety issues and the enterprise agreement. These days there is little talk of the paltry 0.3% PA pay rise on offer through the agreement. It has become a major issue over the intransigence of the governments refusal to respect the negotiation process or the unions proposals.

Already we are many months past the use by date of the current Enterprise Agreement, yet there seems to be no urgency on the part of Government or Unions to finalise a deal which will give employees a decent wage rise or certainty over job security. Because payment for new agreements are not backdated to the expiry of the old agreement any more, each day that passes sees rail workers fall further behind in take home pay.

Who's at fault here?

On the 19th Feb, or thereabouts, Transport for NSW and the NSW Government applied to the Industrial Commission for industrial action that was being undertaken by the rail unions and their members to be terminated. This was largely unsuccessful. However it resulted in the RTBU calling off several actions. In a back

room deal between the RTBU and the Government, members of the union were never allowed to give their opinion on the compromise deal, nor were they informed. The cancellation of the limited strike action by the union was never put to a vote of the union membership or the workforce.

Because of the RTBU leaderships surmised weakened state of compromise the NSW Government thought it could strike out at the Union once and for all in a manoeuvre that was not well thought out or executed. On the 21st February 2022 the NSW Government shut down the whole of the NSW rail network and attempted to smear the unions. They cited safety concerns, which were blamed on the rail unions. They also intimated to the public that they could not provide safe passage during industrial action, therefore, that rail services could not be provided. This effectively was a Lockout, an industrial tactic by the government, which was prepared to inconvenience commuters around the state in their attempts to smear the union.

If terminating industrial action in the courts had not been successful Transport for NSW had planned to shut down the network for 2 weeks based on a safety risk assessment they had completed several days before. Of course, in the face of this, the RTBU leadership acquiesced rather than speak to their members to decide what they wanted to do.

The high stakes gamble of the NSW Government for a Lockout of workers on the Sydney rail network backfired on them. NSW Transport Minister Elliot denied that he knew about the shut down of the rail network when he was faced with public criticism. Yet documents produced in the NSW parliament prove that the Transport Minister had full knowledge of the proposed shut down and lockout. This was a tactic dreamed up by the back room bullies of the LNP. Senior Transport Officials have been scapegoated for the debacle despite the fact that they produced evidence of unsuccessful attempts to contact the Transport Minister the night before the shut down.

However a serious industrial campaign by the RTBU and rail unions has still not been instituted. Both sides instead trade blows calling on the other party to negotiate back-room deals around the table.

These paragraphs on WSWs.org sum up the situation within the union hierarchy.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/03/09/nswr-m09.html>

Notwithstanding the political embarrassment, TfNSW and the Perrottet government in fact achieved precisely what they set out to do. The manoeuvre was aimed at shutting down industrial action on the railways and getting back to the business of imposing a regressive enterprise agreement, which is exactly what the

u n i o n i s s e e k i n g t o d e l i v e r .

This is in line with the role played by the RTBU for decades. In one enterprise agreement after another, the RTBU has enforced job cuts, increased casualisation, and the punitive 2.5 percent per annum wage cap.

This is all part of a drive towards privatisation which the union has facilitated for every other mode of transport in NSW.

Conscious of workers opposition to the deepening assault, the RTBU confines disputes to long and demoralising campaigns of limited work bans designed to cause minimal disruption. This is aimed at wearing workers down until they are forced to accept a rotten deal cooked up in union-management talks. Imagine what a realistic industrial campaign could have been achieved by union members.

In light of the hypocrisy over safety. It was alright for the Government to take industrial action, yet the union was denied taking these safety actions, the union now has a precedent to put their safety issues forward in a forceful way.

In fact, the struggle should not see the union back pedal from this point on. To capitulate at this point would be a demoralising defeat. Can we be sure that the leadership will take up the cudgel and move the fight forward while the ball is in their court? Well only we can guarantee that. By coming together in our workplaces and demanding democratic changes in the union and in our workplaces we can demand to stop backroom deals by our officials and include us in the processes at play.

Rank and file participation is a necessary part of the solution of pressuring the government over the EBA and safety. Yet we have been sidelined effectively despite the limited tinkering of an ineffective industrial campaign. A well organised militant campaign is necessary to move the goalposts once and for all and give members new faith in the power of union. However we must move forward together, as workers, as comrades, in solidarity and unity.

CARINGBAH STATION NEWS

In May 2021 at Caringbah Station a P/T CSA (Customer Service Attendant) notices an envelope containing \$80 missing out of the safe, rings CAM (Customer Area Manager) & says the envelope is missing but I didn't take it. F/T CSA & delegate who's had run ins with same CAM, returns from days off with mental health issues and is accused by the CAM with a background in a supermarket chain who is trying to make a name, of fraud, stealing, etc. CAM hounds F/T CSA for confession.

F/T CSA sarcastically replies "yeah I took it". Next minute F/T CSA is charged with 4 code of conduct charges with not one piece of evidence bar a sarcastic remark. DISMISSED.

F/T CSA appeals to Transport for NSW on 20/10/21 but to no avail. Dismissal stands.

Meantime P/T CSA has told anyone who walks past about this after signing a confidentiality agreement. Gets put on a PCIP, a slap on the wrist.

Now F/T CSA has to go to Fair Work Australia Court to try & get her job back with no income.

This took place without one piece of solid evidence, no witness, no CCTV, nothing. Just a smart ass comment.

Angry NSW Rail reader and supporter

LETTER

Dear Sparks

The RTBU has failed to protect its members as some 350 RTBU members have been stood down because they don't want to be vaccinated. The majority have valid reasons but Transport for NSW demands they get vaccinated or get sacked.

Transport for NSW hired as Secretary Rob Sharp a man that was sacked from Arnotts, Tiger Air and Virgin Air. Sharp on his Linkedin account shows celebrating 80 percent vaccination. How could this person be independent?

Sharp falsified Risk Assessments and failed to do risk benefit ratio where there is a comparison of deaths and adverse reactions from the vaccine compared to benefits.

Sharp put out a timeline to February: get vaccinated or be sacked by February. When I asked the RTBU to do something they stated they support vaccinations.

To date the RTBU have done nothing and during Christmas those staff members that have done nothing wrong, face the sack without any compensation.

I cannot believe the RTBU failed to represent its members. Other staff treat us like lepers, yet the RTBU worry about the right to wear shorts.

Management are refusing to accept the EA in regards to a status quo ruling by Deputy President Easton on the 7th January FWC(Fair Work Court) 22 which opposes stand downs and sacking of workers who refuse COVID-19 vaccinations.

The RTBU is failing to represent workers that don't want this vaccine.

I have been at home for 8 weeks since 5 Dec mandate using my own leave yet being a union member means nothing. As the RTBU has sold itself to back big pharmaceutical companies.

Management has advised me that this decision is confined to ETU/CEPU/AMWU members within the Engineering and Maintenance Branch of Sydney Trains. It does not apply to me and other stood down Sydney Trains workers.

Furthermore I add workers have been stood down since 05/12/2021 and these

draconian measures must now end.

Sydney Trains has 350 loyal hard working team members at home when we have severe staff shortages and I believe the FWC ruling shows they should be back.

Risk Assessment need to be done in a proper fashion and if the mandate isn't withdrawn through this dispute then let's go to Fair Work. Punishing innocent workers must stop now.

Sydney Trains Reader and Supporter

EDITORIAL COMMENT:

A very difficult issue, especially now that so many rail workers have become infected. A risk assessment would easily come down on the side of immunisation.

Since the large numbers of people in ICU, and those losing their lives, are not vaccinated. Its a bit like a struggle between free will and the greater good. As a union they have a duty to uphold both. However realistically the "greater good" in the health and welfare of the majority of members is always going to win.

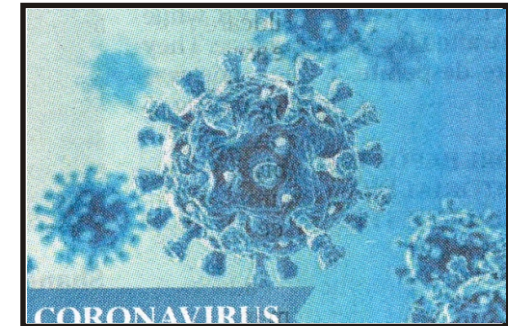
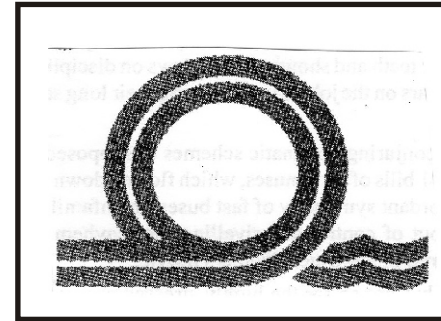
Yet the union should at least talk to these members. The other thing is that the non vaccinated pose no threat to the vaccinated. They could realistically go back to work at their own risk.

A difficult issue for any union, but it could be done as it poses no threat to anyone except those that refuse to vaccinate.

(Continued From Page 2.) light on the treacherous cave-in by the RTBU officials on this issue and privatisation of the Eastern STA Depots and their fake anti bus routes cuts campaign. (See article page 18.) Other important news has been the RTBU and TWU 'Two Tier' EBA campaign. Like the Rail EBA campaign, its proving to be half hearted and ineffectual. The pay rise achieved is likely be heavily battered by the Super increases and constantly rising inflation and in reality a real wage cut. (See article page 19.)

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Warning: Political Satire The Omicron Crisis

From early January 2022, the new NSW Liberal Premier Dominic Perrottet was facing major pressure from Liberal Party Godfathers and various corporate high rollers over the worsening COVID-19 'Omicron' mutation infection rate. They were particularly concerned about the associated decline in business confidence affecting NSW State of Business. They were expecting rosy business vistas with the end of the Delta mutation crisis. Now dark clouds were building up over the State and their business fortunes. They were demanding the holding of an urgent meeting of NSW Inc. to discuss and tackle the crisis. On Monday 7th February Perrottet finally buckled under the pressure and called the holding of the meeting for Monday 14th February at Transport for NSW Head Office at 9am sharp. On Friday 11th February he did the traditional ring around to notify and invite NSW Inc. members of the gathering. In addition to the usual suspects including his Ministers, heads of the Business Council of Australia and the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, CEO's from Real Estate, Banking, Transport and other industries, together with union bosses like Alex Claassens from the RTBU, Richard Olsen of the TWU, Mark Morey Secretary of UNIONS NSW. Additionally he invited along as special guests the head of Qantas International Operations and Queen Sally McManus of the ACTU Royalty.

TWO TALES OF THE FAILED RAIL EBA CAMPAIGN

Alex Claassens RTBU NSW Secretary had been presiding over a special Loco reps meeting on Friday 11th February about the progress of the EBA campaign in the union head office conference room when his mobile buzzed with the call from the Premier. As he entered the room the new union legal officer who had been following him like a shadow, suddenly startled the audience by dramatically smartly saluting his boss and loudly tooting a dismantled train horn like occurred during the EBA

campaign in the depths of the COVID lock down in near deserted stations. It was a new protocol pinched from the Royal Australian Navy for piping Admirals aboard ships. It had been enthusiastically and unanimously approved by the union executive, to raise the prestige of the State Secretary when entering union meetings. Then the legal officer started handing out 'RTBU Loans' flyers to the reps, chattering the new corporate union jingle "members, let us do it for you", then kneeling and furiously shining Claassens expensive 'foreign made' shoes.

Dramatically pointing at the legal officer, Claassens announced triumphantly to the reps, "Look, he thought he could continue bludging in his job. I've had some news for him! He's been further multi-tasked. With some sleight of hand during the union office Xmas party and booze up, I had our new legal officer sign off an MOU (Memorandum Of Understanding) overriding his existing Union Staff EBA. Like I did back in early 2017 with the MOU for DOO on the new interurbans. It's legally binding on both parties. If he whinges I'll just tell him my hands are tied! See I've extracted more value from your union dues! Another win, win, win for members!"

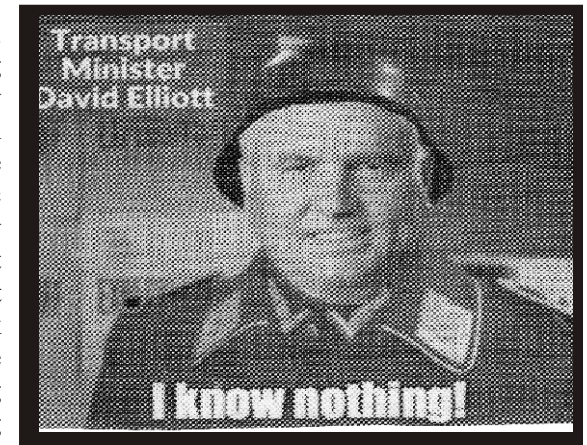
In his opening address Claassens regaled the reps with the EBA campaign's tacky highlights. Such as the 'Claytons' network wide strike from 8pm to 4am on 20th - 21st Dec., an upcoming 11pm to 3am 'strike', other industrial action partially sabotaged using the pretext of trains which were Australian made still allowed to run and lame mischief making during the COVID-19 lock down period. With the fake demand for the interurbans for new software to allow guards to open the doors which is not an allowable condition for enterprise bargaining according to the the Fair Work Australia Court. Finally he claimed a fake victory with the promise from management that no DOO operated trains will run in NSW. However the introduction of the new interurbans implies DOO with drivers now operating the doors. Following his spiel, Claassens received thunderous rounds of applause for his outstanding and inspirational leadership in the campaign.

20% pa Pay Rise for Secretary Claassens!

One loco rep proposed that Alex for his outstanding efforts deserved at least a 20% pa pay rise exempt from the NSW Public Sector cap plus compensation for the legislated Super increases which would seriously batter any fake EBA pay rise for lesser mortals such as the grass roots in the railways and the buses. He announced, "Alex if you have found the union is broke again from splashing our precious union dues on 'Post Lockdown Free Union Booze Up's', I'm sure we'll all be delighted to have a special levy imposed on our wages to cover it. These days we understand the need for some 'belt tightening' for a good cause. None of us could possibly object to taking the hat around the depots to raise funds for a more prestigious car for the State Secretary. I'm sure the members and union executive will grant an indulgence for the purchase of a 'foreign made' luxury vehicle unlike trains during the EBA campaign.

Perhaps a top of the range Merc, BMW Sports Soft Top or a Jag with luxurious leather upholstery inscribed with the union logo in gold lettering. I'm confident the members will be enthusiastic contributors. I'm absolutely certain we'll hear cries of delight when they are approached. What a great idea! Why didn't we think of it! These days members are devil may care about rising inflation, petrol prices, rising

rents and of course the super increases. Alex, all we need to know is your gross wage p.a." Sheepishly Claassens suddenly disappeared from the scene using the pretext of a very urgent, important phone call from Premier Perrottet. Secretary Claassens expressed delight to the Premier about attending the meeting and assured him that he and Babineau from the Bus Division would be attending the gathering. They had great news about the 'set up to fail' rail and bus EBA campaigns.

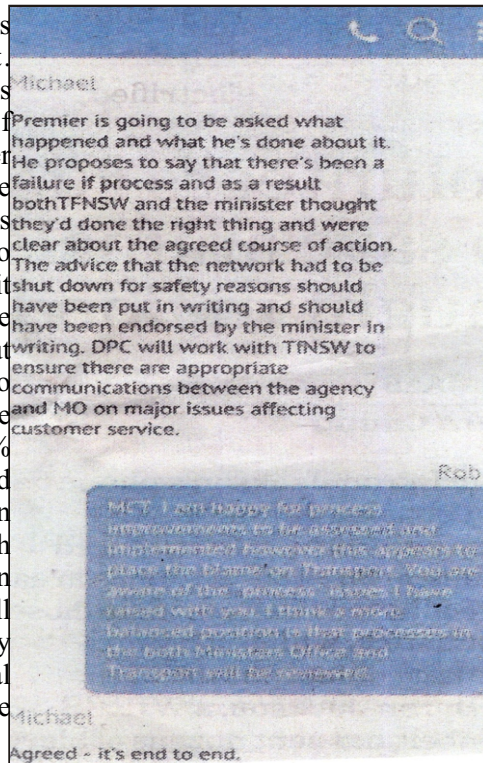


Too Many Secret Handshakes can Spoil the Economic Recovery Broth

On entering the conference room in the NSW Transport Ministry HQ at 9am sharp Monday 14th February, Premier Perrottet was mobbed by his fan club of newly minted Cabinet Ministers from the recent reshuffle and Corporate bosses giving him secret Opus Dei handshakes and coded greetings. Alex Claassens and David 'I'll throw STA Drivers under the Bus' Babineau from the RTBU in trying to get pally with the new Premier however stuffed up. Clumsily Alex tried on a secret Hillson Church handshake and coded greeting which he had spent years painstakingly perfecting as part of behind the scenes ALP electioneering with Churches. While Babineau tried on an old fashioned Masonic handshake and greeting. Richard Olsen from the TWU and Sally McManus ACTU Secretary also slipped up, compounding the RTBU officials indiscretion with offering ALP Godfather and Godmother secret handshakes. The Premier responded coolly. To patch things up, Sally inquired whether Perrottet, his Ministers and Corporate heavy weights would be interested in some relaxing ACTU sponsored 'lap dancing' after the conference.

Before making his opening address, Perrottet in Christian Revivalist mode invited all the audience to join him in a prayer to the economic recovery of NSW State of Business. The Premier then proceeded with his opening address. With the aid of a graph he outlined how the Omicron outbreak was seriously threatening NSW 'State

of Business' economic recovery. It was having serious economic fallout. Business confidence was in a precarious state and new increased levels of investment were jeopardised. However he had some solutions: the need to force COVID-19 infected workers in logistics and other key sectors back to work and so keep the wheels of industry and profit making moving. Another solution he peddled was the need to cut, cut, cut wages and break workers resistance to privatisation. He referred to the depression of the 1930's and how 10% wage cuts were common. He emphasised the importance of the NSW Railways in spearheading the cuts at that time. With the first 10% wage cut being imposed in the NSW Railways, then spreading to all state Railways and then through industry and even those on the meagre social welfare of those days such as Age pensions.



The Spider's Web of the Sydney Rail Lockout Conspiracy

He moaned that a certain underground paper had scuppered plans for a Sydney rail network lockout down during January 2022 to smash train drivers resistance to privatisation moves. However he wanted to try an indefinite lockout again from Monday 21/2/22. He expressed understanding that many corporate high rollers would object for selfish concerns about their profits, but it would be in the best interests of all in the long term. We have to break industrial resistance from train drivers to Driver Only Operation to fast track privatisation. Perrottet's proposal for the lockout met furious criticism from the President of Business NSW Lyall Gorman and Executive Director of Sydney Business Katherine O'Regan. They winched piteously about it being the wrong time for the lockout and would seriously harm their members profits and bounce back from the COVID Lock down. They threatened darkly to cut off contributions to the NSW Liberals' Re-election fund, if Perrottet's Govt. went ahead with his mailed fist against rail workers at this inopportune time.

The New NSW Transport Minister David "I know nothing" Elliott, intervened in the discussion. He avidly supported the lockout idea. "We originally planned the lockout for the January holiday period and business down time. We already had in place various line closures and booked replacement bus services using the pretext of track maintenance but as Dominic says we were snookered. So we are planning the lockout from Monday 21st Feb. for an initial two weeks with replacement rail-buses already booked. My Department has even already war gamed it. My staff have liaised with other affected Departments such as Education and have received the nod. Everything is looking good. However, if it all turns pear shaped, I'll just do a Sergeant Schultz and tell the media I know nothing! I've already arranged a 'fall girl' Megan Bourke-O'Neil Deputy Secretary of Transport for NSW if required to take the heat!" He announced.

Next off the rank was special guest Qantas International chief executive Andrew David. In his speech he fully endorsed Premier Perrottet on his wage cutting spree push. He outlined the vanguard role Qantas is playing in cutting its workers wages and conditions. Particularly the slashing of wages and conditions for cabin crew on the airline's international routes. It would involve pushing them onto the industrial award with minimum pay and conditions legally allowed for the industry. Base pay would be cut by 20-40 percent, and cabin crew could be made to work 48 -88 more hours per 56-day roster period.

Next Queen Sally McManus of the ACTU, addressed the meeting about how the ACTU and the Federal Liberal government had developed a de facto partnership. She and then Industrial Relations Minister Christian Porter unilaterally altered awards covering millions of workers. This cut their conditions, including paid overtime, while ensuring they remained on the job. She assured the Premier and the assorted high rollers, that a similar partnership with Mark Morey of UNIONS NSW and other union bosses can be established in NSW to fast track COVID infected workers return to the job to remedy alarming staff shortages and the growing threat to the revival of the NSW economy and business confidence.

Claassens from the RTBU then barged into the discussion. He assured Premier Perrottet and his merry men that he could accommodate the lockout idea. Over the years he had discussed the concept with various Transport Ministers and now Minister Elliott at routine secret 'touch base' weekly meetings.

He proudly pointed out his union's industrial action from late February will be so lame, it would not prevent Sydney Trains from operating the full weekday timetable. He considered the enterprise bargaining charade with plenty of smoke and mirrors was the best way forward. Rather than the lockout. He cautioned that blunt wage cutting might spark direct action such as in the loco division. The drivers still have important industrial muscle now. When all the Metros are in place, it will be a different story. He emphasised that the lockout tactic could blow up in the face of the Govt. causing discontent amongst business leaders and commuters. He went on to

outline how the union's Sydney and NSW Trains fake EBA campaign seemed to be working well with all the half hearted actions to exhaust the grass roots and heading off direct action amongst grass roots drivers for their 'real' demands. It had already saved the Government heaps of money as the previous EBA 2018 ran out in March 2021. He needed some understanding of his situation. He just needed to drag out the lame duck campaign until Sept. so he can get a fake pay rise through before the RTBU elections held during Nov. and December this year.

Then Babineau from the Bus Division joined in. He cheered the audience with his tale of heading off any industrial resistance to the carve up of the rump of State Transit for privatisation. The door will now be open to further carve back drivers wages and conditions as occurred following the privatisation of Region 6 saving the NSW State Business big money. He would be all in favour of his members in the buses operating rail bus replacement services to further the rail lockout.

Richard Olsen from the TWU then joined the discussion with a report on his union's 'Two Tier' campaign in Region 6 and far Western private bus depots. He particularly highlighted the token half hearted strikes in the lead up to Xmas. He complained about a certain underground paper outmanoeuvring his bureaucracy who were initially intending to call the action during the January 2022 Holiday 'down time' period. The campaign also cleverly headed off an industrial campaign to fight the privatisation of the STA rump. He also supported the current enterprise bargaining 'smoke and mirrors' performances. Particularly the current half hearted joint TWU and RTBU bogus 'two tier' EBA campaign. He foreshadowed the coming marriage of his union and the RTBU. It will save the Govt. big money with the introduction of a 'collegiate' electoral system as exists in the TWU in the merged union. Grass roots members will be denied the vote for important positions. Only union reps can vote in these elections. So no need for ballot rigging with the secret help of the AEC(Australian Electoral Commission) like in Comrade Claassens's RTBU in its 2014 and 2018 elections. It will be a win, win situation for all. In concluding his spiel Olsen indicated he would ensure his members operating replacement bus services during the proposed lockout. He harked back to his union's role in the strike breaking during the RTBU's highly orchestrated fake lightning strike after the previous Transport Minister Constance announcement of the privatisation of Region 6 in 2016. In having the final say, Premier Perrottet announced to the gathering his determination for the rail lockout to have 'right of way' on Monday 21st February. Various business leaders would just have to 'bite the bullet' to make NSW The State of Business with the initiative!

At the conclusion of the conference Queen Sally McManus of the ACTU invited all the pollies, corporate high rollers and union bosses to the recently opened ACTU subsidiary 'Executive Companions Retreat', adjacent to the RTBU Home Loans office. Where she was moonlighting as a lap dancer and orchestrating a variety of intimate corporate partnership services.

SYDNEY BUSES NEWS



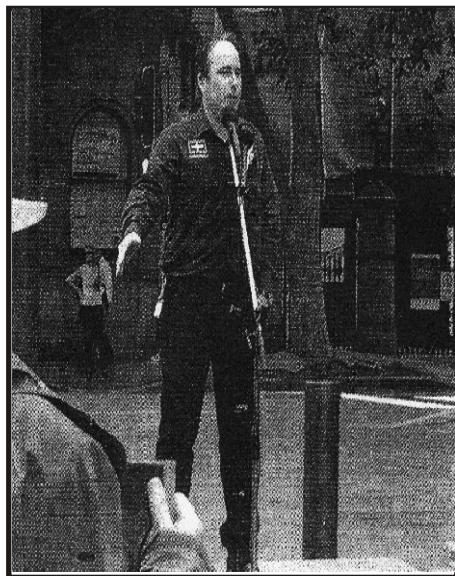
Scene from protest rally outside NSW Parliament over Eastern Subs Bus Cuts

REPORT ON RALLY TO OPPOSE EASTERN SUBURBS BUS ROUTES CUTS

With the lessening of the Delta mutation of COVID-19 pandemic and removing of lock down restrictions, the NSW Govt. moved ahead with the foreshadowed bus routes cuts affecting the Eastern Suburbs and South West Suburbs. From Sunday 5th December the following bus routes were abolished: 391, 393, L94, 395, 400 and 400N and a range of other changes to routes and bus stops location were made worsening bus services. UNIONS NSW and the RTBU(Rail Tram & Bus Union) officials organised a public meeting/rally opposite the NSW Parliament at 1pm Wednesday Nov. 24th.

The rally was addressed by David Babineau NSW RTBU Bus Division Secretary, local ALP MP's and others. UNIONS NSW had 150 pensioners from the affected areas bused to the rally to make up the numbers. In Babineau's spiel he admitted that the bus route cuts were in line with NSW Govt. plans to privatise the Eastern Suburbs STA bus depots and Light Rail Rail extensions. In particular the route cuts

would compel more commuters to use the Eastern Suburbs Light Rail and increase revenue for the new private operator. Babineau also informed the audience that as a result of the route cuts 150 lines of work for bus drivers would be lost. Potentially leading to the loss of 50 bus drivers' jobs in the Eastern Suburbs depots. Babineau also went on to refer to the foreshadowed fake industrial campaign by the RTBU and the TWU (Transport Workers Union) to tackle the 'two tier' employment regime in private bus companies in NSW. With the older ex-STA (State Transit Authority) drivers in privatised sections of the STA such as Region 6 on better wages and conditions than new drivers mostly TWU members on worse conditions. Babineau omitted to



Babineau in full flight at the rally.

mention that the Rightwing ALP officials of both unions played a key role in creating and preserving this 'two tier' regime. In a previous STA/RTBU enterprise agreement the union officials gave the green light to a clause which extended STA bus driver so called 'traineeships' on much worse wages and conditions than permanent bus drivers from 6 months to 2 years. The TWU officials have also colluded for many years in worse enterprise agreements for private company bus drivers than those for STA drivers.

The rally was clearly another lame duck measure by the union officials to look like they were doing something to fight the bus service cut backs and looming privatisation but doing nothing with any serious effect. Meanwhile providing an ALP election stunt for upcoming NSW State elections later in 2022.

Randwick Depot News

Sparks: What are your thoughts on the recent massive bus route cuts in the Eastern Suburbs?

Randwick Driver: The cut backs have seriously disadvantaged commuters. They now have to catch connecting buses to reach destinations. The Govt. should provide them with discounts as compensation for being inconvenienced in their commuting. As a result of the route cutbacks from 5th Dec. 2021 I have noticed we have become busier. I have not noticed any reduction in lines of work and

associated major reduction in pay. The bosses with the complicity of the union officials have seized the opportunity of the route cuts to reduce our layover/rest breaks on runs. I have particularly noticed this speed up in our work in regard to the layover break with the 370 which now operates from Coogee to Glebe Pt. Road. Other news is that wheels are moving with the privatisation of the Eastern Depots. Its going to occur in April. Transit Systems which won the tender for Region 6 will be the new private operator.

Port Botany Depot News

Sparks: What your impressions of the major route cut backs affecting the Eastern Suburbs in early Dec.2021?

Pt. Botany Driver: The cut backs are adversely affecting both us and commuters. A major objective of the cut backs has been to force commuters off our buses onto the Light Rail. Many of us are very angry over the cutbacks as a result of having major cut backs in our shifts and pay. Other news is that the privatisation of the East Suburbs depots will be going ahead in April angering many of us at the depot.

Waverley Depot News

Sparks: What is the latest at the depot with the massive bus routes cuts and privatisation push affecting the Eastern Suburbs depots?

Waverley Driver: I haven't heard anyone making complaints about the route cuts. However some must be complaining, workers supporting the RTBU officials at the depot have been spreading mis-information of the officials justifying the route cuts from 5th Dec. 2021 on the basis that the cuts such as the abolition of the 400 and 400N from the Airport won't seriously disadvantage commuters and bizarrely in certain cases would be necessary. Consequently justifying the officials not holding a stop work mass meeting and the taking of industrial action on the issue and subsequent privatisation due to lack of commuter and community support. Despite large community attendance at the Save Our Buses Rally on 30/5/21 near Randwick depot. As part of the privatisation of the Eastern Suburbs depots in April we will be issued with new uniforms in February. Meanwhile as part of an ALP back room deal and privatisation push the TWU looks set to takeover coverage of us in early 2022.

Another development was a major change in management at the depot a while back. With the departure of 'Madam Lash' from the scene. She was considered one of the worst bosses in State Transit. She particularly set out to sack many drivers through catching them out and setting them up for disciplinary action.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What is the latest with the union at the depot?

Leichhardt Driver: At a union meeting in late January we were advised by the union delegate that Transit Systems had agreed to the 2.5% pa wage rise. However, the company boss had been unwilling to back date the rise to when our former EBA expired. The union is demanding an approx 1.7% pa extra rise to cover arrears due with the back dating of the new EBA rise. The bosses have been so far unwilling to pay the arrears/back dating. The union officials say they are currently fighting for the arrears so the EBA campaign is continuing.

Editorial Comment: With the legislated super increases to 10% pa in 2022 and 12% pa in 2024, there will be a major cut back to 'in the hand' money from the EBA wage rise. Entailing a super rise of 0.5% pa and so only a 2.04% pa wage rise, effectively a pay cut taking account of the current 3.5% pa CPI inflation rate. However, the price of non-discretionary goods and services, including food, fuel, housing, utilities, school fees and health care, went up by 4.5%. Why aren't the union officials highlighting these issues and demanding further rises from the bosses to cover the Super increases, current 'real' inflation rate and projected inflation increases during the length of the EBA?

Sparks: What is other news at the depot?

LD: There was an unusual development in mid Jan. At this time the manager/supervisor who had been at the depot for some years, suddenly resigned. However the relief manager/supervisor was in isolation due to infection with COVID-19. So for a few weeks we had no such bosses. Management has been taking a very tough line on vaxing. They were continuing to threaten the sack for any drivers not having the first and second boosters. Other news is that on 23/8/21 the 'A' Team and 'B' Team rosters were introduced, where drivers would work one fortnight and be off the job for the next fortnight but paid their average wage. This set up has been scrapped a while back.

RAIL BUSES IN NSW

In this issue of Sparks we will discuss the State Rail Bus Operations within NSW from the inauguration in 1975 until they were put out to tender in 1990-1991. As in previous issues names have been changed.

Sparks: What was the situation in 1970?

Taylor: In 1970 all passenger rail services were operated by the NSWGR.

Clyde: You had air-conditioned trains running to Albury, Broken Hill, Griffith, Bourke, Cobar, Coonamble, Moree, Tenterfield, Brisbane and Nowra. There were locomotive hauled trains, air conditioned rail cars plus the Silver City Comet sets.

Taylor: Other services were operated by CPH Railcars, 600 sets plus 600 rail cars which operated country services plus Newcastle and Sydney outer suburbs trains.

Clyde: As long ago as 1935 NSW GR Commissioner Hartigan said there was no future in long distance trains.

Taylor: Between 1943 and 1951 Air Conditioned Carriages were built. These carriages were known as HUB sets for short distance working and RUB sets for long distance travel. Thus after 1951 no sitting carriages were constructed for locomotive hauled trains but sleeping cars were constructed up until 1970.

Clyde: Other lines were serviced by mixed trains plus goods trains with passenger accommodation. These trains serviced a fair number of trains such as Grenfell, Cowra, Oberon and Dorrigu.

Sparks: How were non paying lines discontinued?

Taylor: When timetables were re-issued every few years a message appeared in the time table 'service suspended'. In 1970 this was the situation with lines to Dorrigu, Warren and Rand.

Clyde: In 1971 there was a savage fare increase. Single fares were raised 50% and Country fares by 95%.

Taylor: Passengers deserted the trains in droves and in 1972 further trains in Southern NSW were cancelled and not replaced by buses.

Clyde: In 1972 both the NSWGR and DGT were merged into the PTC of NSW with a Chairman of the Board named Phillip Shirley.

Taylor: This person was an Australian who had worked overseas in the UK for British Railways. He had closed a fair amount of the Railways in the UK when he worked for Dr. Beeching. Questions were asked in Parliament if he was to be the hatchet man for the NSW Railways.

Clyde: In 1974 the PTC proposed to remove a fair amount of train services in NSW. There were widespread protests but in the end it was a dispute in the oil industry which removed the trains.

Taylor: This occurred in August 1974 when the oil company who supplied fuel to the PTC suspended deliveries of fuel.

Clyde: As a result there were widespread suspensions of services across NSW.

Taylor: When the oil dispute was sorted in September 1974, 20% of these service suspensions were made permanent.

Sparks: What was left of the Country Services?

Clyde: What remained was Albury, Tootumwal, Hay, Griffith, Tumut, Cooma, Blayney-Horden, Bourke, Cobar, Coonabarabran, Walgett, Moree, Inverell, Barraba, Brisbane, Murwillumbah, Nowra and Yanderra-Moss Vale. All the other services were suspended with no replacing bus services and to this day in 2022 the

following towns of Tottenham, Hillston and Queanbeyan have never received a replacement bus service.

Taylor: At the same time as the oil dispute PTC officials travelled to Western Australia to observe the Bus Operations of WAGRA. These bus services were run directly by the Railways. The plan was to have PTC buses operated by the PTC replacing trains running out of Dubbo.

Clyde: In late 1974 tenders were called for ten air-conditioned buses to operate services from Dubbo to Bourke, Cobar, Coonamble, Lightning Ridge, Lightning Ridge, Dubbo to Mudgee via Coonabarabran.

Taylor: Before these services commenced there was a demarcation dispute over who was to Drive the Buses. The ARU (Australian Railway Union) said it was their work and the Tramways Union claimed it was theirs. The dispute went to the Arbitration Commission who ruled displaced employees at Dubbo who were ARU members were to work on the buses.

Clyde: These employees were trained in Sydney by Bus Division Inspectors at Willoughby Depot with services commencing on 27/9/75.

Sparks: What happened to Phillip Shelley?

Clyde: He resigned from the PTC over a dispute about closing the service on the Picton Mittagong loop line. An interstate freight train was run into in the Loop at Bargo where it remained for a couple of weeks.

Taylor: In 1976 it was announced that the XPT trains were to be built to replace aging rolling stock. Also the PTC was to be split into two entities. One was to be the State Rail Authority and the other the Urban Transport Authority to operate the Buses.

Taylor: In 1982 State Rail announced that aging Railcars were to be replaced by SRA road coaches. These Buses were to be based at Tamworth, Grafton, Canberra and Wagga and over a period of four years services to Cooma, Tocomwal, Tumut, Hay, Griffith, Bourke, Inverell and some local services on the main line such as Lithgow-Orange.

Clyde: In 1988 the Greiner Govt. was elected and decided to axe a few more trains. This occurred in late 1988 when the mail trains were removed plus Moree, services to beyond Tamworth and a recast of trains in the Brisbane Corridor. Buses operated by SRA were to be put out to tender against the Private Operators.

Taylor: The Department of Transport in NSW were to handle the tender and not State Rail. State Rail was allowed to submit tenders for services but as the Working Conditions were superior to Private Bus Operators, there was no hope of winning the tenders.

Clyde: There were already contractors operating some former rail services. These were Picton Mittagong Rail Replacement service contracted in 1975. The first major replacement of a Rail Service in 1989 from Dubbo to Broken Hill and this was run by a Private Operator and not State Rail. This replaced the Silver City Comet

from Parkes.

Taylor: By 1991 State Rail had lost all Country Bus operations. They were now contracted to Private Operators.

Sparks: What happened to the Road Coaches?

Clyde: The former State Rail Bus Fleet were taken to Sydney and stored for pending disposal.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

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

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

Ichabod: Managers are still trying to scare their employees.

Sparks: In what ways?

Moose: A couple of WA122 kios in the industrial relations section who want to reduce leave for shift workers from five weeks annual leave to four weeks annual leave.

Midge: To be granted five weeks annual leave you will have to work 32 Sundays a year.

Rastus and Roscoe: This proposal was an attempt to cut staff. A number of Holiday Relief Positions would be abolished. Five weeks leave for shift workers has been in the Railway Awards since 1976. Before 1976 it was four weeks.

Archie: An extra weeks leave is granted to employees who work continuous rotating shifts as a shift penalty for loss of social life.

Forsyth: The Union knocked this proposal on the head but it is seen as a threat in the future.

Ichabod: Due to the COVID outbreak, a number of Government Departments have been told to reduce costs and perhaps this proposal was an idea from these WA122 kios.

Rastus: During COVID restrictions V/Line has run full train services.

Roscoe: Due to privatisation, though V/Line is a statutory authority of the Victorian Government, their franchise states that X number of trains have to run. The same franchise conditions apply to M Trains and Yarra Trams.

Moose: To cut services legislation would have to be passed to cut services by Parliament as what happened in Britain. In Britain the Railways have been virtually nationalised and cuts to services have happened.

Rastus: Due to COVID a number of drivers had to go into quarantine so one weekend in September all V/Line services were suspended and replaced by Buses. No employees were stood down.

Forsyth: The only cuts to Public Transport was the night network on the weekends. The employees who worked these shifts were redeployed.

Archie: It was alleged the COVID infection occurred in the meal rooms. The meal room at Southern Cross Station is a common meal room which shared with non rail workers.

Rastus: Extra meal rooms have been provided for drivers. The meal rooms have been divided into separate meal rooms for drivers from various regions.

Moose: An extra meal room has been provided for rail workers, V/Line was reluctant to provide this facility as they claimed it would cost an extra \$75,000 in rent. They were forced under O,H&S rules to provide the room.

Sparks: What has happened to the V/Line Board?

Rastus: The Board was dismissed and V/Line is now a Statutory Authority of the Victorian Government with the Chief Executive reporting to the Minister of Transport.

Sparks: What is the situation at Bendigo?

Roscoe: The manager has been redeployed to Head Office where he is now in charge of issuing Travel Dockets for Drivers taxis. He has replaced the previous Train Drivers Manager who was doing this job. This manager's contract was not reviewed.

Rastus: He has certainly made an impact with providing taxis.

Sparks: In what way?

Rastus: He arranged for another Taxi Company to provide the service and these taxis are turning up at Country locations for up to an hour late and Drivers are left stranded.

Roscoe: In one instance a Driver had to be taken from Traralgon to Melbourne and the Taxi from Dandenong to Melbourne did not travel by the free way.

Sparks: Why?

Roscoe: The taxi driver told the Driver he could not use the toll road because his employer would deduct the toll charge from his wages.

Rastus: Unfortunately these incidents are common in the taxi industry and we hope this matter is reported to the Taxi Directorate.

Roscoe: We Drivers have a feeling that once this manager's contract comes up for renewal he will be flicked out of V/Line.

Sparks: What about the CSM in Bendigo?

Harriet: He has returned to his previous position at Seymour.

Herbert: The CSM position at Bendigo has been abolished.

Moose: The CSM positions are to be abolished and replaced by an enhanced Customer Service Position which will supervise all station staff as well as conductors.

Rastus and Roscoe: If you want to know about CSM's refer to issues 130, 132, 147 and 152. Drivers have a low opinion of CSM's due to the antics of a few.

Midge: We employees wonder if the CSM's will have to reapply for these Customer

Service Positions as well as the existing Customer Service Officers.

Moose: They use this method to eliminate employees. If you are unsuccessful you are declared redundant.

Sparks: What is the situation at Bendigo?

Harriet and Herbert: We have a new manager. The tension in the depot is reduced but we will have to wait and see.

Sparks: What about the sacked manager?

Herbert: A settlement was reached before the matter went to Fair Work Australia. We do not know the outcome as the settlement was confidential.

Harriet: We do know he did not receive a Retired Employee Rail Pass because the Pass Office says he was sacked.

Ichabod: V/Line notifies the Pass Office when an employee with over twenty years is sacked. V/Line should wait until all avenues of appeal are exhausted before approaching the Pass Office.

Moose: When an employee is sacked V/Line uses threats as coercion to stop employees from discussing these dismissals. V/Line tries to keep the matter under wraps.

Sparks: Once again space is against us. We hope the Union and others petition the Pass Office for a sacked manager and we hope the Depot at Bendigo can return to normal.

Rastus and Roscoe: Once again in having the final say we call on all V/Line employees particularly conductors and Authorised Officers to treat employees who have been unjustly sacked with over 22 years service as retired employees. If everybody sticks together and shows some unity this matter could be resolved.

In this issue of Sparks we will be discussing the use of Sub Standard Rolling Stock on V/Line Regional Trains. Drivers, Conductors and Station Staff will discuss these issues. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.

Sparks: What is the current situation at V/Line as regards rolling stock?

Midge: Conductors arriving to run their trains to Shepparton, Warrnambool and Swan Hill have seen an 'H' set substituted for an 'N' set in a regional service.

Archie: The V/Line network is divided into two zones. One area is the Commuter zone in which the MYKI system of ticketing is used. This is bounded by Waurin Ponds, Wendouree, Epsom, Eaglehawk, Seymour and Traralgon.

Forsyth: The outer area whilst bounded by Swan Hill, Ararat, Warrnambool, Shepparton, Albury and Bairnsdale is classed as Regional.

Finbar: Carriage sets which are classed as 'N' sets are used on these services. The carriages are both First and Economy Class and have buffet facilities. The long term plan is to replace these sets with Railcars classed as Velocity Trains with Buffet Facilities.

Rastus: Velocity Trains are currently being used on Regional Services to Ararat, Maryborough and on some Bairnsdale trains. As well as Echuca.

Roscoe: 'H' sets are used on peak hour Commuter Services within or radius of 100 km's of Melbourne.

Sparks: What is the origin of the 'H' sets.

Finbar: These carriages were converted from 'Blue Harris' suburban trains built between 1956 and 1971. In the 1970's certain politicians in the Liberal Party who ruled Victoria between 1955 and 1982 wanted to replace all country passenger trains except Geelong with buses. There was a political backlash in 1980 and a compromise was struck. In 1981 a number of trains were axed with the remaining services being modernised with 'N' sets being introduced between 1981 to 1986.

Roscoe: Because of limited finances 12 first series 'T' class locomotives were converted to 'P' Class locomotives between 1981 and 1984. These locomotives were equipped with head end power.

Finbar: At the same time a number of Blue Harris suburban trains were converted to 'H' sets. The Harris cars were stripped of asbestos and entered service from 1984 onwards.

Archie: The 'H' sets were used on all commuter trains plus the Leongatha service. They were used on a Shepparton service plus holiday extra trains and for Specials for various sporting events.

Rastus: In 1985 'N' Class locomotives equipped with Head End Power entered service. On trains with locomotives not equipped with Head End Power, power vans were used.

Roscoe: In 1982 with the split of V/Line into Passenger and Freight some 'P' Class locomotives were handed over to freight. Due to Velocity Trains being placed into service in 2016 V/Line Passengers 'P' Class were withdrawn. Some 'P' Classes had been returned for works trains.

Moose: 'H' sets were to have been withdrawn by 2014 but due to increased passenger usage their withdrawal dates have been deferred.

Ichabod: In the last few years the use of 'H' sets in a number of regional trains has increased with these sets operating to Warrambool and Swan Hill.

Sparks: I wonder how a passenger would feel riding up to 300 km's on one of these sets.

Midge: Imagine if you are a passenger who has purchased a first class ticket to Swan Hill. You arrive on the platform and see a 'H' set as your train. The conductor walks through the train, apologises for the inconvenience and gives the passenger a refund slip to give to the booking clerk at Swan Hill. In the meantime you are in for a rock and roll journey.

Ichabod: You would make a vow never to travel with V-Line again.

Midge: One carriage in the 'H' set is not equipped with a toilet and only one set is equipped with covered gangways. The only good point about the 'H' set is that it is

maintained to a satisfactory standard.

Sparks: Why do they run 'H' sets on these services and not Velocity trains?

Finbar: If the train does not run, V/Line is fined. Because Shepparton is the shortest of regional services 'H' sets are used. Velocity trains are not accredited to operate to Shepparton, Warrambool and Swan Hill.

Archie: Of the 18 'H' sets four sets are of standard gauge for the Albury service. The remaining 14 sets are used in the broad gauge. Velocity trains are being built for Albury services.

Rastus: Rolling stock has been increased over the last fifteen years but the ratio of maintenance staff to trains has not been addressed.

Roscoe: This should have been addressed when the franchises are renewed.

Midge: On Saturday recently I was rostered to work a Ballarat train. Whilst preparing the train I noticed a 'H' set on the adjacent platform. I was informed the set was operating a train to Shepparton. Whilst running the service to Ballarat I saw an 'N' set stalled at Bacchus Marsh for the weekend. It would have made sense to work this set as empty cars to Melbourne on Friday night and used the set as a standby train for the weekend, then with the set back to Bacchus Marsh on Monday morning.

Forsyth: The movement control office will not listen to any suggestions from conductors regarding these moves. Conductors at times wonder whether they have the power of positive thinking. You could write a book about the clashes with conductors over the years.

Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. V/Line should plan ahead and make sure 'N' sets work these Regional Trains. Replace the 'N' sets on the Geelong and Bacchus Marsh trains. This may free up 'N' sets for Shepparton.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, 'H' sets should be used on these Commuter services. Imagine if you were a passenger using a Mobility Aid and you were placed in the carriage without the toilet. Finally the movement control office should listen to employee suggestions not ignore them.

