

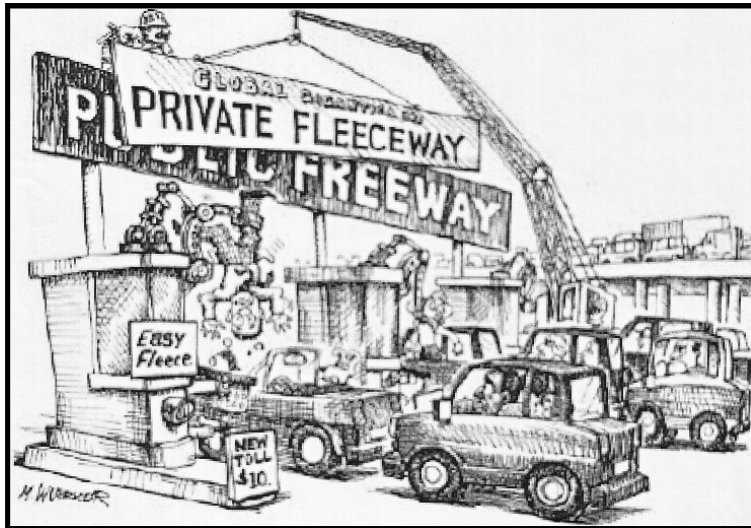
No.154

Mar. - April 2016

# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**BAIRD SHARPENS KNIVES TO CARVE-UP  
PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR PRIVATISATION!  
ORGANISE ON THE JOB TO DE-RAIL THE  
MASTER PLAN WITH DIRECT ACTION!**



STA BUSIE NEWS;  
400's GAUNTLET;  
STA SICKIE HARASSMENT;  
BAIRD & PRIVATISATION;  
OPAL CHAOS;

NSW RAILWAY NEWS;  
VIC. RAILWAY NEWS;  
INTERNATIONAL NEWS;  
STA's "MADAM LASH";  
NSW - BUSINESS NOW!

## **EDITORIAL**

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important news lately in the Railways was the announcement by the Baird Govt. of its intentions to privatise the Sydney Trains network. The privatised North West Rail Link will be an important piece in this puzzle. Associated with this carve-up is the NSW Govt. Treasurer's announcement of plans for major public sector job losses and the secretive Trans Pacific Trade Agreement. It opens new doors for corporate cowboy privatisation plans. (See article Page 3.) The ALP union hierarchy has of course been playing a key role in paving the way for the big onslaught via successive enterprise agreements. The latest EBA involved a major attack on job security. The union hierarchy in selling the rotten deal, spread the brazen lie that if members voted for it, all would be well. As they would sort out any fiddly little problems which cropped up later on!

It's vital to establish committees in the workplace and inter workplace delegate co-ordinating committees to wage an effective campaign, which must involve as a key component, forms of hard hitting direct action. "Drivers for Affirmative Action" in March 2004, which waged a very effective campaign based on direct action, blazed an important trail in fighting the Government. It won large bonuses, without any give backs. In stark contrast to the big sell outs the union hierarchy "achieves" with the "smoke and mirrors" of successive EBA's! Important lessons can be drawn from this campaign for the current struggle.

In the STA, the privatisation carve-up is already occurring with the selloff of Newcastle Buses, together with the Ferries and Light Rail in May. The union hierarchy has refused to call STA wide mass meetings to consider industrial action on the issue. (See article Page 14.) Another piece in the puzzle is the sudden savage tightening of running times on routes, particularly hard hit has been the 400's. (See article Page 13.)

Whilst a certain "Madam Lash" has been engrossed in surveillance of particular drivers at Randwick to fit up for the sack, associated with the closure of the depot. (See article Page 10.) Did you hear about the 2015 STA staff Xmas Party? Maybe not, but our spy was there, so we can provide an interesting report of fat cats in their element and their revealing little chats with Baird and his merry hench men. (See article Page 7.)

**Sparks welcomes contributions in the shape of poems, articles and cartoons by transport workers. Please send to Sparks PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW or via our web site [www.sparksweb.org](http://www.sparksweb.org)**

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# N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

## **A Hard Slog Ahead Unless We Fight Now!**

*by Crimson Coconut*

**In a fit of neo-liberal, privatisation, madness the New South Wales Baird Government is intent on removing the last vestiges of government services to the private sector. In their place we will have a privately owned, expensive, user-pays system of exploitation that will not be able to fully meet the needs of the community. As I write this article, N.S.W. Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian is about to deliver her case for massive job cuts to the public sector. When Liberal Government's talk about "leaner, more efficient" State Organisations they are talking about job losses.**

We have already seen the gutting of the R.T.A. and other Government services which have been morphed into a Government Service Desk at your local Shopping Mall. Everything else has been moved into an online shop where you cannot interact with a human. The system does not work well and requires a login that tracks your life history of interaction with the Government. Much of what is being done is a sop to multinationals as proposed in the T.P.P. agreement (Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement, a secret trade deal between nations around the Pacific which puts huge multinational corporations in charge of workers' wages, privatisation of government services to pharmaceutical prices and everything in between). These Multinational Corporations are lining up to get their hands on State businesses such as Public Transport, Health etc. However large corporations do not need large workforces. The push by the Baird Government to pare back the government businesses to their bare bones is to make them attractive for privatisation.

Just this week a transport lobby group (T.T.F. a consortium of big business, Hotels, Casinos, Airlines, Bus and Coach companies etc) called for private operators to be allowed to bid for the operation of Sydney Buses. This is the same mob that pushed the franchise at Sydney Ferries. They have been backed up by the Auditor General's report which said it was a good idea that could save N.S.W. \$500 million over 5 years. They pointed chiefly to the "success" of the private operation of Sydney Ferries which is claimed to have saved the Government \$100 million since 2012. This is small cheese considering the wreckage that has been left behind in the aftermath of the move to private operation. The privately operated Sydney Ferries, now Harbour City Ferries, has become fragmented as time has gone on. Uneconomical services have been cut, large swathes of the workforce have also been cut. Other operators have entered the Ferry business and are managing the lucrative express runs such as Manly to Circular Quay. In the last month the N.S.W. Government announced plans to privatise the whole of the Sydney trains network. This should come as no surprise considering that already the North West Rail Link will be operated via a consortium of private companies linked to M.T.R., the operator of the Hong Kong Metro. The original proposal was to run trains with-

out a driver or crew on the refurbished line. There has been some concessions granted to allow a driver/observer on the single decker trains. However this will probably be a temporary measure. New technology will also be introduced that does away with most station staff jobs on this line. The eventual completion of the North West Rail Link will see it stretched out to include the Bankstown Line. For those working in Sydney



Trains the future of holding down a job with similar conditions looks grim. Over the last few years casualisation of the workforce, introduction of new technology that has done away with jobs, cost cutting and intensification of work have built a culture of insecurity and inevitability into the workforce. This could have been overcome had there not been so much inertia within the public transport unions.

According to the Government, efficiency, customer satisfaction and productivity has been massively improved in the rail network. That is a very subjective opinion. However, if we hold them at their word, then the sackings of 2000 people since the introduction of the last E.B.A., has been for nought. If things are on the up, as they say, it shows that State run enterprises can be as “efficient” as those in private sector. Then why privatise or outsource?

If the truth be known the whole exercise is not about improving the running of railways or the buses, it's simply about flogging them off. For the Liberals (and Labor) the “profit motive” is the ideological fulcrum around which these decisions revolve. Nothing else matters. They couldn't give a frig about workers conditions, nor about providing a public service. The only concern is that corporations and their mates get their own way and shareholders get a dividend. For the public, privatisation is a bad deal. In the long run there will be less people to give customer service. Many are already finding this out when they go to the station ticket window, if it is open, to be told to go across the road and buy an Opal Card. Public security will also suffer on stations that will be unattended and on dark suburban streets when buses do not come.

There are already proposals before the Government to lift transport fares beyond the C.P.I. Pensioners will have their fares lifted by something like 30%, and the \$2.50 Sunday Funday tickets are to be abolished if, as predicted, the proposal gets adopted. A massive rise in general fares from outlying suburban areas is also proposed. Some estimates of train fares after

privatisation suggest that they could be three times the current value. If you take the example of fares on the privatised Airport Line and those that have been put forward for the North West Rail Link then a tripling of the current fare after privatisation is feasible. Privatisation of railways around the world have been an unmitigated disaster. If you lived in Melbourne you could read constant accounts of safety breaches, poor maintenance standards, cancelled services and a system that is dysfunctional by world standards. Likewise, privatisation of British Rail led to the fragmentation of the railway into different sections owned by different companies. Workers in the rail system are under constant attack from unscrupulous bosses and there have been calls from disgruntled commuters to re-nationalise the railways to lift standards.

The beginning of the privatisation of British Railways was marked by a string of serious rail accidents leading to an unacceptable loss of life. Essential maintenance was not carried out because it ate into the profits of the private operators. That is the bottom line of privatisation. In N.S.W. privatisation of Sydney Trains and Sydney Buses will be a disaster for the public transport workforce which will definitely be under the pump once the privatisation is officially announced. There will be attempts by the Government to water down any obligations to workers in the upcoming E.B.A. to align themselves with a transition to private management and operation. The wage freeze of 2.5% P.A. is also still current so don't expect the Government to be generous either.

## **What do we need to do?**

Rail workers and Buses have known for years that all of the take-backs of management were leading down the path to eventual privatisation. It has been clear for a while now as we have watched successive sections disappear from the workforce from Cleaners to Ticket Clerks, Station Support Officers, Duty Managers, Senior Managers, Station Masters. Now management want to sell the core, the rotting carved up carcass of the railway and the buses, for a song. But those of us that are left are worth more than that. We kept the rail system running while management was sabotaging and throwing spanners in the machinery in order to put the blame on us. We can't go down without a fight. While all the other jobs were lost, not a finger was raised by our union to organise a widespread fight back that could have stopped the hemorrhaging of valuable jobs. Except for a few cronies that sucked up to management or the union, not one decent job was saved. If we had fought with the help of the Union Leadership things could have been different. But that help never came, and workers on the job failed to organise, so the job losses went on and on.

We cannot wait for our unions to act on the proposed privatisation. By the time an official announcement is made it will be far too late. The support of the Union may be helpful for us to put up a decent fight. We will have to make the first organisational moves though, it may mean we have to drag them screaming and kicking into a confrontation with the Government. Alex Claassens, R.T.B.U. Secretary has already stated that the Union will fight the privatisation of Sydney Trains. We need to make sure that he keeps his word on a fair dinkum fight that involves us all rather than a few union bureaucrats. We have to get the public on side. The public must learn how much different a privatised Public Transport system will make to their daily

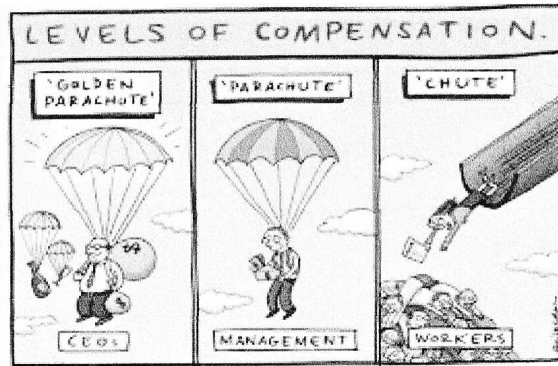
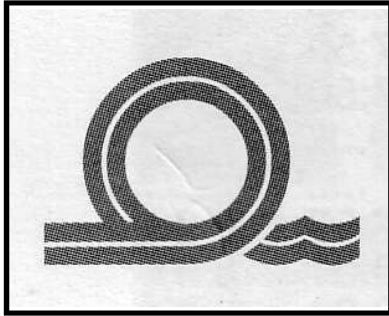
commute. Air your views by writing to the letters section of the daily and local newspapers, engage the public in conversation and win their support for a campaign against privatisation. I believe that most Australians are against privatisation if it is going to cost them more or they if they are to lose services. Hold regular impromptu meetings of workers in your workplace and work out strategies that you can use to educate the public, to defend yourselves, to make and distribute leaflets and to educate yourselves about the issues of privatisation. Solidarity and respecting other viewpoints and working together is essential.

There should be some goal setting at such workplace meetings with tasks divided up amongst attendees. Hold public leafleting days against privatisation on your days off. Turn them into a social event with lunch, a few drinks or a get together afterwards. Bonding sessions are good for the struggle and for building solidarity. Picket, public transport depots and offices with placards and produce tee shirts against privatisation. Produce buttons, that you can wear when you are not working, asking for support for a campaign against privatisation. Ask the union for support for a campaign of this nature. We at Sparks will help where we can to produce leaflets and other paraphernalia against privatisation. Just drop us a line. All in all you must deny the momentum that the Baird Government has for privatisation. In the end everything may be on the line and there may be little to lose. The time to prepare for that eventuality is now, not later when it will be too late. For this reason it is important to make links with other workers in the public sector who are also organising against job cuts and privatisation. The bigger you are, the stronger you are.

Despite what the union tells you about strike action being “illegal”, when the battle gets down to the wire and you are faced with losing your job or your standard of living is under threat, strike action, carefully planned and communicated may be an effective weapon. However such a course of action must be thoroughly evaluated for its effect at the appropriate time.

Wildcat strikes without agreed aims or a fuzzy objectives have little chance of changing things and can demoralise those involved when they fail. Organise, talk, and organise for the best chance of success. Just remember “if you don’t fight, you lose” and “If you don’t try, you will never know if you could have won.” Working together, create your own luck and your own destiny. We’ll be in touch.





## N.S.W. - BUSINESS NOW!

Word was spread far and wide across the STA about the staff office Xmas party 2015 to be held in the conference room at the Transport For NSW Head Office. All senior management, depot managers, admin. Staff, faceless Transport for NSW bureaucrats, the union executive, and their families were invited along to enjoy the festivities. Even various Ministers of the Baird Govt. who were inspired by CEO Rowley's "axe wielding with a smile" management style came to cheer him along. They included, the Transport Minister, Andrew Constance, Minister for Financial Services and Property, Dominic Perrottet, Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, Duncan Gay and Minister for Planning Rob Stokes. Sleek railway fat cats also crept in, such as Sydney Trains CEO Howard Collins and NSW Trains CEO Rob Mason. One of our spies at Sparks, even managed to sneak in. He was disguised as a depot admin. Staff member fresh from the training school, sporting the new fashionable Stasi style look of gleaming jackboots and trench coat with dark glasses.

At the commencement, the assembled crowd was regaled by Peter Rowley, STA CEO in full flight about his many accomplishments in corner cutting during the year. He finished off his spiel with a "quiz". Rowley, chuckled, "by how much did you think, I was able to cut drivers' wages, using the excuse of the George Street Closures to reduce shifts?" The "quiz" was followed by more fun and games in the shape of competitions - who was the most "creative" at fitting up an imaginary older driver for the sack, the most ruthless at tightening bus running times, the best at fire breathing when an imaginary driver is called into the office for a cosy little chat....

A choir of depot managers enthusiastically led by maestro Rowley, suddenly burst into song and began to serenade the throng, with the Abba hit of the 80's "Money! Money! It's a rich man's world!" Expensive, vintage French Champaign was flowing, courtesy of the Union Executive from the cellars at their Redfern Kremlin.

Following the “fun and games”, Rowley had become quite merry from imbibing the union officials “largesse”. Suddenly he was approached by his young nephew.

**Nephew:** Uncle Peter, a bus driver mate of mine showed me recently a copy of the latest edition of a magazine called “Sparks” which gets around in the buses. I noticed there was a transcript of an interview done with you by the Journalist Jana for a community TV show. You did a great job handling her aggressive style of questioning.

*Rowley: It was all about “looking good and not looking bad”. It’s a technique, we big bosses learn on the job these days, to help push Government Neo Liberal agendas such as privatisation by stealth.*

**Nephew:** What have been the steps in this stealthy agenda which you have been orchestrating?

*Rowley: Don’t you worry about that! I can assure you, it’s working out quite smoothly. Just look at Newcastle.*

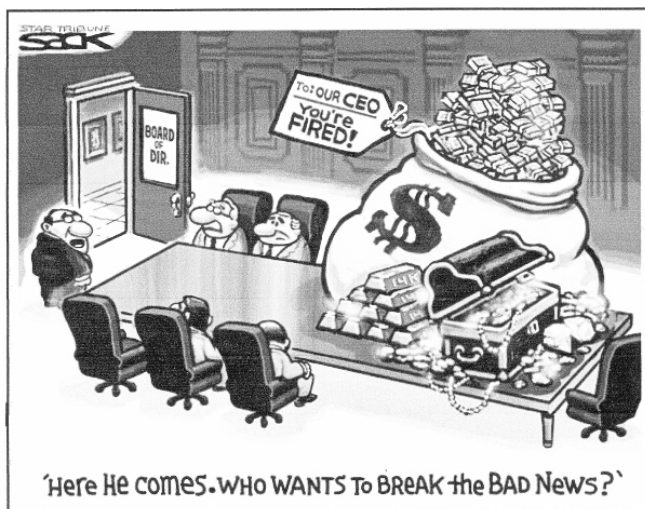
NSW Transport Minister Constance, who had been very much under the weather thanks to the union officials generous gift, and was sitting nearby, over heard the cosy chat and barged in. He blurted out some juicy personal details.

*Constance: When we get through with the complete privatisation of the STA, after the light rail extensions are constructed, I’ll be retiring from politics. I’ve been offered the general manager job in the Australian subsidiary of Veolia with a guaranteed 5 year contract. I’ll have my pension, plus five times my current salary, plus bonuses and a company car.*

Sydney Trains CEO Howard Collins who also had become quite merry, suddenly joined the cosy chat.

*Collins: When I’ve carved up the railways into franchises and sold them off, I’ll be resigning. I’ve already got the CEO job in Pacific National lined up. Apart from a \$1 million golden handshake. I’ll be getting 4 times my current salary, plus a company car and 20,000 shares in the company.*

Dominic Perrottet, Minister for Financial Services and Property, then chirped up.



*Perrottet: In a couple of years time after we have sold off all that council heritage property following the council mergers, I'm also out of politics. I'll get the job as CEO for MIRVAC. I'll have my pension, 10 times my current salary, unlimited free overseas trips each year, 50,000 shares in the company with a company vehicle and annual bonuses!*

Suddenly out of the blue, NSW Premier Mike Baird of all people turned up. He came over to Rowley and shook hands.

*Baird: Congratulations Peter, on how you're running the STA into the ground, but "looking good, and not looking bad!" Your former boss, Gladys sends you a big sloppy kiss!*

Hearing this praise from his big boss, Rowley was thrilled! His face was beaming with a big swell head! It was the happiest day in his life!

*Baird: However Peter, I've now got some bad news for you. There is a glitch with your promotion to head of the NSW Corrective Services Department. We have found you to be too honest!!*

Rowley was astounded and struck dumb on hearing this revelation.

*Baird: Peter, you will understand of course, that you will have to acquire the necessary "pre-requisite" in regard to "ethical standards" for this important position. So we are going to provide you with some necessary "on the job training". It turns out, we in the Liberal Party are in great need of "bagmen" with the NSW elections coming up.*

*So Peter, we are expecting you to use your smooth style to do the rounds of your various boss mates in the transport industry for some "under the table" donations. As a Xmas present, Pe-*



*"I don't bother with the health club...  
benchpressing my wallet works just fine."*

*ter I'm giving you one of these jumbo size attaché cases for the carrying of some "corpulent brown paper envelopes"! I'm giving the other to Sydney Trains CEO Howard Collins, who will accompany you on your rounds and take you to see his corporate railway fat cat mates to also contribute to our coffers.*

*Baird: Gentlemen, do you accept this mission?*

Rowley and Collins, with their chests thrust forward, stood in formation before their revered big boss. They saluted, clicked their heels, yelled "Heil Baird!" and bellowed that they accepted with relish and it was not impossible! As the dynamic duo were skipping merrily on their way to do some Liberal Party fund raising. Baird with a sly smile, suddenly called out to them cryptically, "New South Wales!" They turned and yelled back in unison, "Business Now!"

## S.T.A. BUSIE NEWS

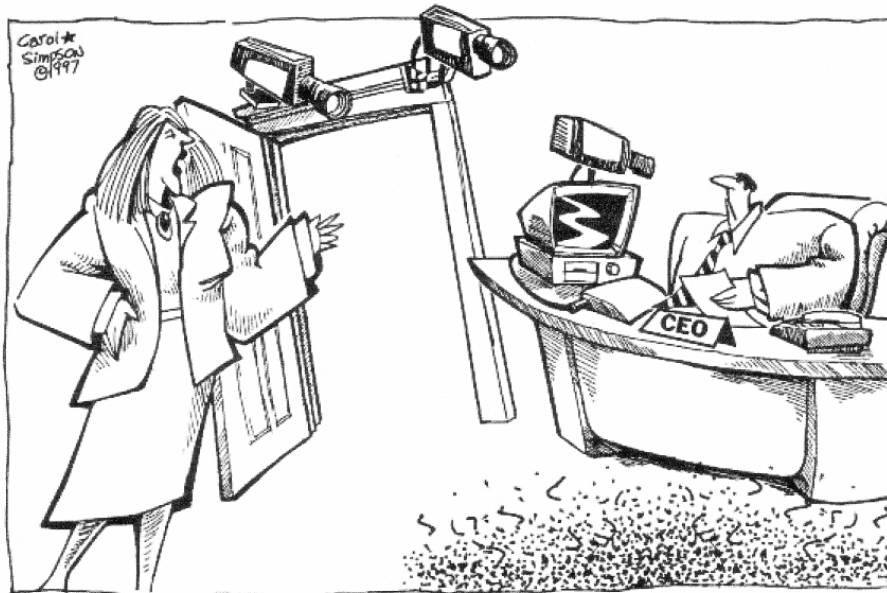
### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

**Madam Lash: State Transit Dominatrix lashing out with her crop!**

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the current situation at Randwick?**

Waverley Busie: Originally the site of Randwick depot was a foundry, subsequently it became a bus depot. On several occasions over the last thirty years, its location was moved. It was the depot where I was first trained for the job many years back. It's to be closed by the Baird Government. As according to latest information received, the contract for the sale of this valuable land has already been signed! It's likely the Government's developer mates will construct 4-6 storey apartments on the site. The light rail extensions in the Eastern Suburbs is providing the pretext. Associated with these extensions, the bosses announced, there will be an excess of 220 STA buses on the road in the city. Implying in their statement that at least one depot must close and many runs will be cut. Associated with this move, the bosses want to "cull" many drivers at Randwick, which they regard as "surplus to requirements", particularly the older drivers and those who aren't expected to put up much resistance. The rest are likely to be transferred to Waverley or Port Botany.

"Madam Lash" has been assigned the task of targeting certain drivers for the sack by higher management. She originally was a STA bus driver. She never pulled any punches, became cosy with the bosses and was promoted into a management job. Her technique for doing the dirty work, is to access data from the Global Tracking of bus movements, surveillance camera footage, checking times when drivers sign off. She also goes around in a van following certain drivers on their routes. It's likely she has others also doing this on the road surveillance. In all this monitoring, she looks for patterns, which she can use to build up cases for the sack. Involving say drivers sitting a bit longer than necessary in the bus before signing off to get some overtime and constant shortages. So far, she has managed to have a group of drivers sacked and others have been driven off the job. Consequently, spare drivers from other depots are



*"But sir... you said to install surveillance cameras  
where there was suspicion of illegal activity."*

continually being sent to Randwick due to the staffing shortage, associated with Madam Lash's mayhem. No one so far is standing up to fight it.

When this new monitoring technology was first introduced, we were told by management and the union officials it was not going to be used for disciplinary action. Just to help with say handling such issues as difficult passengers. However, this latest episode and many subsequent cases, has shown this is a brazen lie! The union bosses appear to be doing nothing to tackle the legality of this misuse by management of new technology and data accessing for its nefarious agendas. Whilst, they haven't even the guts to reveal to drivers, the depot closure master plan and its ramifications!

Grass roots controlled industrial action such as a "work to rule" away from the tentacles of the union officials, needs to be considered at Randwick and across the STA over the issue. Madam Lash needs to be found alternative and more appropriate employment where her "bondage techniques" can find a more wholesome outlet, such as in the dungeons of one of those exotic clubs in Kings Cross! Where perhaps she can make more "intimate" acquaintance with the aid of her slashing crop, of some of those big STA bosses, she so admires!

Another worrying aspect of management at Randwick, is that it has knocked back offers from other depots to improve amenities for staff with such flimsy excuses as lack of space or on OH&S grounds. It seems they don't expect Randwick to be in operation for long.

### **New Attack on Sick Leave Must Be Stopped!**

At Waverley, we are now seeing management putting pressure on Admin. Staff to nail drivers for a disciplinary dividend on bogus grounds. It's been noticed recently in regard to sickies. Despite drivers clearing the sick leave with the Roster Clerk and supplying medical certificates, drivers are being called into the office. On the basis that they turned off their mobiles/phones, and so were not contactable for an interrogation by Admin. Staff about the sickie. We have to put our feet down and stop this harassment! We need to impose a ban on going into the office.

### **Sparks: What are your thoughts on the latest rampage by the Baird Government?**

WB: The Baird Government is drunk with money making to help out their business mates in their profiteering. They seem to be acting like the Bjelke Peterson regime in Qld. They are a law unto themselves and their Big Business backers, seeking to squeeze the poor, every way they can. Their strategy in pursuing these attacks appears to be based on wedge politics. It involves targeting isolated groups, one by one, relying on a lack of solidarity on the job and in the community, with many just keeping their heads down. Latest news has been its cutting down so far of 80 trees, half of which are figs which have been cut down near the Eastern Distributor, along Anzac Parade and along Alison and Wansey roads, close to Randwick Racecourse, as part of the light rail extensions. One area where the trees have been cut is near the Randwick TAFE building. Despite nearby land being available without trees. It looks terrible. Some of the trees to be culled are part of the ANZAC WWI memorial. Overall, the Government plans to cut down approximately 425 trees. Despite land being free of trees available along the Randwick race course area. However, the Racecourse didn't want to supply this land, as it has other plans for it. Cunningly, the Govt. has commenced cutting the trees in early January, when many people in the area were on holidays. Consequently, initially they have been able to avoid mass protest action by the locals and people from other suburbs. Only a tiny handful made it along to protest. However, on Sunday 14/2/16 there was a large protest near the trees, with the crowd spilling onto an affected street.

In the case of Daceyville, where a relative of mine lives, the housing commission residents are facing huge uncertainty. Ominously, she and other residents have recently received a letter from the Baird Government advising there will be major changes in the area associated with the light rail extension in the area. It's likely the depot for the light rail will be constructed either near South Sydney Juniors Leagues Club or East Gardens Shopping Centre. However, at the moment the location is not certain. We believe a likely scenario is that the Government intends to bulldoze down most of the WWII veteran's small garden provided heritage housing commission cottages in the area and construct 4 storey units by their developer business mates. Other cottages in the area will just be sold off. Some current residents will be given the option of purchasing their houses.

Whilst in the case of Waterloo, the Govt. intends to demolish housing commission high rises, with the excuse of complaints about drug addicts and the need to construct a new metro station. In this way, developers can construct high rises within 800 metres of the station, according to legislation and then proceed to buy up properties in the neighbourhood to build

more high rises. The new station will also assist the commuting needs of the new apartment owners in the area.

In the case of the WestConnex construction in St. Peters, where 100,000's of vehicles per day will spew out from the exit, some residents will have their backyards next to the expressway. The locals have been given no say in this development. In such suburbs as Haberfield, many heritage homes will be demolished.

Recently I spoke with a lady who had previously lived in Toronto, she mentioned that since 1976 it's government had ceased all freeway development and focused on improving public transport. Today, its public transport system is of an excellent standard with very good connective services. In contrast, various NSW Governments, since that time have constructed a whole stack of freeways/Tollways such as the M2, M5, Cross City Tunnel, Harbour Tunnel, culminating in the current WestConnex. Whilst private companies have financially benefited from operating these tollways. However, the Govt. is wasting public money on "white elephant" transport infrastructure such as the construction of the foot bridge over Anzac Parade to the Stadium at Moore Park. No one seems to use it and was over budget. It's failing to spend money on urgently needed infrastructure, such as a new large bridge at the Spit in Mona Vale on the North Shore, to replace the existing small bridge. Access to the Domestic Airport is currently a disaster with traffic being very slow and needs urgent expenditure to remedy the problem. Over this period, bus and rail services have become rundown.

The Baird Government's big push to privatise and redevelop, housing commission properties and support for the WestConnex, seems also to be in line with plans to boost the NSW economy by further stimulating employment and investment in the construction and housing sector, given the down turn in the mining and related sectors. It also seeks to raise huge amounts of revenue from stamp duty on new housing sales. On say a house worth roughly \$1.1 million, the purchaser pays roughly \$45,000 in stamp duty. With the WestConnex, we are seeing the M2 again. With ever greater levels of traffic gridlock in the city. It makes a joke of the Baird Government's talk of making Sydney a "liveable city".

#### **Sparks: What other tactics of the Liberals have you noticed on the job?**

WB: One tactic I have noticed has been to impose "bumbling" bosses, to wreck up the operations of Govt authorities to facilitate privatisation moves. I believe this tactic is being used across the NSW public sector. Lately at Waverley we have been seeing this wrecking graphically with the critical state of bus maintenance with many bus break downs on the road. Whilst, the bosses blame the mechanics. Lately I've noticed running times on many routes are being tightened up. If you complain, there is a lot of buck passing going on. With the Radio Room, and the schedulers being unable to do anything to remedy the problem. The union officials, as usual have their hands tied and will do nothing. The hidden agenda of the bosses looks to be to do this dirty work to supposedly increase productivity, so when the Government's business mates takeover, they don't need to do anything regarding the running times.

#### **The 400's Gauntlet Hurled Down!**

An example of this process is the recent changes to the 400 going from Burwood to Bondi. In the past drivers fought for a ½ hour layover time, as the run is very long taking normally 1 ½

hours. Suddenly out of the blue, the layover has been cut to ¼ hour. Now when you get to the end of the run, its already time to leave! This cutback is completely unsustainable and will cause a crisis in STA operations. Both Waverley and Kingsgrove drivers, who share the run are up in arms over the change. I've had brief conversations with many drivers from both depots who operate the run. They have all said the time has been cut and they all find it difficult to stay on time. We urgently need a meeting of drivers from both depots to discuss the changes to the 400 and tackle the problem. Many in Depot Admin are becoming fed up with Rowley and his path of carnage in the STA. The STA is being set up to fail.

My wife who works in another Government agency, has had a similar experience. Her new boss has been creating havoc and running down the service, by finding pretexts to sack professional staff vital to the service operation.

Another method is for the Government's media mates to rundown public owned facilities over its deficiencies. The Daily Telegraph has been playing this role in regard to the STA. It recently ran a story where it listed 460 commuter complaints. However, when these complaints were individually examined, most turned out to be quite trivial. This technique was used on the Sydney Ferries, prior to its privatisation. The media was full of stories about ferry accidents. Following the selloff, the media has been very quiet. However, if you ever go down to the Quay, you can see the ferries are now being run on the smell of an oily rag. It's very unwelcoming without anyone to greet commuters and has a very dilapidated appearance. When I last travelled on trains in South Australia, I noticed a marked decline in the quality of private train service. In comparison with the fantastic meals on offer with the Government operated services, the standard of food was quite poor. A very restricted and dull menu was supplied. As we have said in Sparks over the years, when public transport is put in private hands, it gets run down. As the company can't afford to do adequate maintenance and will cut corners to make profits. Workers lose interest in their jobs and leave. In the case of Adelaide buses, which have been privatised, many casuals are being put on, to fill spaces, due to the old timers leaving. Whilst, commuters are discouraged from using it due to poor services. With the loss in patronage, the bosses are encouraged to cut back the services even further in the interest of maximising profits.

### **Sparks: What's the latest developments with Newcastle Buses?**

WB: According to information received from the union, with the completion of the Light Rail in May of this year, it together with the Buses and Ferries will be sold off by the Baird Government to one of its business mates. Newcastle people are



very angry over the sell off and aware of the corporate rip off which is being perpetrated against them. The local council is also up in arms over the issue. Intriguingly, the Newcastle area, just prior to the last state elections was the focus of a wide web of corruption amongst Liberal politicians, which was exposed by ICAC investigations.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the current council amalgamations championed by the Baird Government?**

WB: Other news in regard to local government, is that the Baird Government is currently engineering the merger of councils into a few super councils. The hidden agenda being to eliminate opposition to its plans and the plans of developers/real estate agents by independents and greens, who have a better chance to control smaller councils. Whilst the mergers will create the pretext to selloff valuable heritage council buildings such as town halls. In this way, the Baird Government is running down the quality of the local environment in the interest of its money making.

**Sparks: What is the latest in regard to the Opal System?**

WB: Unlike the previous green machine ticketing system, the Opal system and equipment installed on buses isn't owned by the STA. Its owned by Cubic, the company which supplies the technology. This is weird! If our manual updating of the Opal doesn't fix a problem, the company techs have to be called in. However, there is no regular maintenance being done. The Opal system's constant malfunctioning is causing buses to run late and ever more stress for both drivers and commuters. Many commuters regard the Opal as rushed in and there is widespread and growing anger in the community about the system. It's currently also losing millions in revenue. Whilst over charging many due to technology malfunctioning and commuter error. Other news is that the STA is short changing commuters by not issuing new timetables. Whilst on say the 440 to Bronte, there are plans for a major cut to bus tops. There is a likelihood that on the part of the route along Norton Street from Leichhardt Town Hall to Parramatta Rd, the number of bus stops is to be reduced from 3 to 1. Definitely, in comparison with 3 to 4 years ago, we are now seeing a very inferior bus service.

## **BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: What are the major concerns currently at Burwood?**

Burwood Driver: A major issue many of us are worried about at the moment is the privatisation of the Buses, Ferries and Light Rail in Newcastle. People's thinking is that if it can be made to work in Newcastle, it can be made to work here. However, according to training instructors, the Newcastle system is quite different from Sydney, with a different fare structure and stops. We feel we are not getting the full story from the STA or the Union officials. The "gung ho" manager, we had was only doing the job temporarily. In recent weeks, we have got a new manager.

**Sparks: How is the Opal system functioning?**

BD: We are continuing to face considerable difficulties in most of the fleet. In the case of one bus I have had recently, after ten minutes on a run, the system immediately froze up. If you can't fix the problem via manual adjustments, the bus has to be booked up and the tech called. The problem with this approach, is that a certain number of buses have to be booked

off, for the tech to come out. Consequently, for many runs, the opal on the bus remains malfunctioning. The STA has advised new software will be introduced on the Opals. However, it will only be related to new stop information.

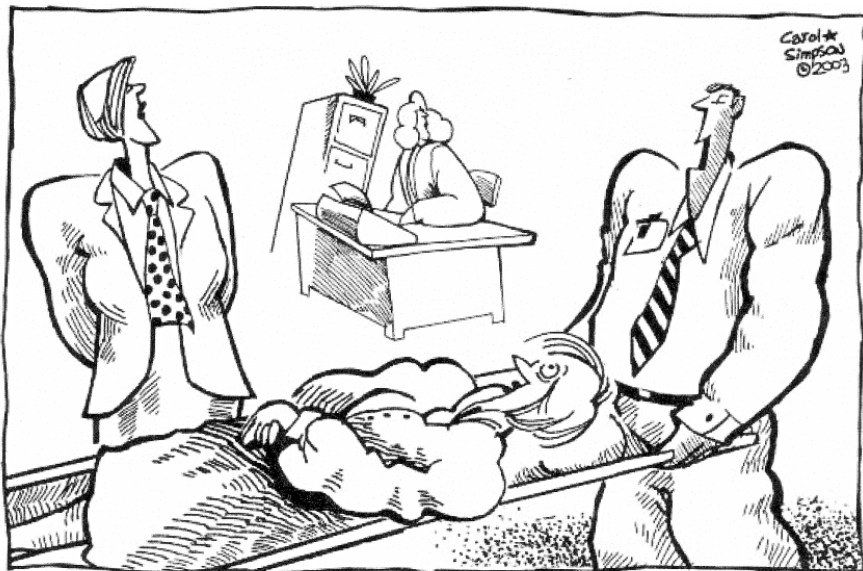
**Sparks: What is the latest with the part timers?**

BD: Now all new drivers start on the job as part timers. However, soon as they get on the job, they normally apply for a full time job. Consequently, we now have a shortage of drivers on both week days and weekends. On a separate note, in regard to the performance reviews, it just seems to be a way for some of the bosses to big note themselves and is largely a ticking the box exercise.

## LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

**Sparks: What are the latest developments at the depot?**

Leichhardt Busie: A very hot issue at the moment is management attacks on shifts. Recently, the bendy shifts have been adjusted reducing the length. The schedulers say, they can do what they want. Why is the union letting them get away with it? We seem to be coping with the changes to routes associated with the tramway extensions construction, e.g. the 440 now going to Bronte. We are being hard hit with Opal system malfunctioning. They often suddenly cut out on runs and you have to put in the numbers manually. A new management initiative which we find very annoying is the Radio Room now making announcements throughout the day advising us to check our buses for “unattended baggage”. It seems all in line with some “Terrorism Phobia”, the Government on various levels is trying to encourage. We are continuing to find the new manager understanding in regard to certain personal issues which drivers face.



*“We met your new production quota. The casualties are coming in now.”*

## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*Once again V/Line employees will discuss ongoing issues around the job as regards to Human Resources and other issues mentioned in previous issues of Sparks. Once again names have been changed.*

**Sparks: I hear there has been a restructure in V/Line Management.**

Clarence: You are correct, Human Resources has been merged with Security and Health and Safety into a new Super Department.

Rastus and Roscoe: The head of Human Resources finished a couple of days ago. We do not know whether she was pushed or resigned.

Sheona: You can see the tension around the place.

Clarence: We have no sympathy for anyone who loses their job in Human Resources, as these Bastards have caused stress amongst employees who were stood down and had to front these people for disciplinary reasons.

Rastus: We think the head of Human Resources was removed over a number of issues where managers picked on employees at various country locations.

Rosoe: Yes, certain employees were victimised and placed under stress, as various managers alleged these employees breached V/Line policy.

Clarence: What policy? They make up policy on the run.

Sheona: A number of these cases were settled at huge cost to V/Line, as compensation and legal expenses to employees was paid out. We wonder whether the V/Line board got wind of the these huge expenses and decided heads would roll to save costs.

**Sparks: A number of our readers were watching A Current Affair, saw a video of a passenger and a V/Line conductor involved in an altercation at a Country station.**

Rastus: You are correct. The location was Broadford and the conductor was provoked by a passenger and he retaliated because this passenger said personal things about him and his family.

Roscoe: The conductor has been stood down pending an enquiry. I also saw Current Affair and most of the viewers who rung up supporting the conductor.

**Sparks: Some of our NSW readers, say the film clip was on news bulletins around the world.**

Rastus: The union cannot support the conductor.

**Sparks: Why?**

Rastus: Because he was not a Union Member, so the conductor may have to obtain the services of an industrial lawyer.

**Sparks: There is a lesson for all. Join the relevant union or you are on your own if you are in trouble.**

Sheona: The unfortunate thing is some new employees will not join a union. One of the reasons could be lack of knowledge about trade unions. But the other reason could be that some employees think that if they join a union, they will be overlooked for future promotions.

Ichabod: When I was in the conductor class, the instructor was bad mouthing the union.

Isabel: Only recently has the union been allowed to talk about the union in conductor classes in Introduction sessions.

Ichabod: As this issue goes to press the conductor involved in the incident at Broadford is still stood down.

**Sparks: What is the BAN on employees in the traffic grades from wearing shorts.**

Penrod: A few months ago employees were given a glossy four page colour book on uniform presentation.

Penelope: The book would have been expensive to produce, Professional Models were used to promote the uniforms. The book stated SHORTS were not part of the Uniform. There was no mention in the book about FEMALE CONDUCTORS wearing SKIRTS.

Roscoe: The Drivers are also banned from wearing shorts. We think the book is a waste of tax payers' money. The amount saved on producing this book could have been spent on fixing up locomotives and carriages. A number of trains are cancelled day by day due to faulty equipment.

Penelope: Although the book did not mention SKIRTS, a couple of days before the new rules were to take effect, a female conductor was called before a CSM and was told that SKIRTS were not part of the uniform.

Penrod: What a joke, this Ban was only introduced because a certain manager thinks shorts and skirts are unprofessional.

Ichabod: The date of enforcement came and went and a number of conductors still came to work in shorts and skirts, then V/Line pounced. The staff clerks were given instructions to send employees home, if they were not in the correct uniform.



Rastus and Roscoe: They were lucky, trains were not cancelled as a driver still continued to wear shorts, but he wasn't stood down. You see, they may have had to cancel a train, as we drivers have a policy. The Policy is, if the drivers think the stand down is unjust, then no one covers the driver's shift.

Isabel: An article appeared in the Herald/Sun about the ban and the shock jocks on 3AW discussed the ban. They made V/Line out as a bunch of idiots, resulting in the ban on female conductors wearing skirts being rescinded.

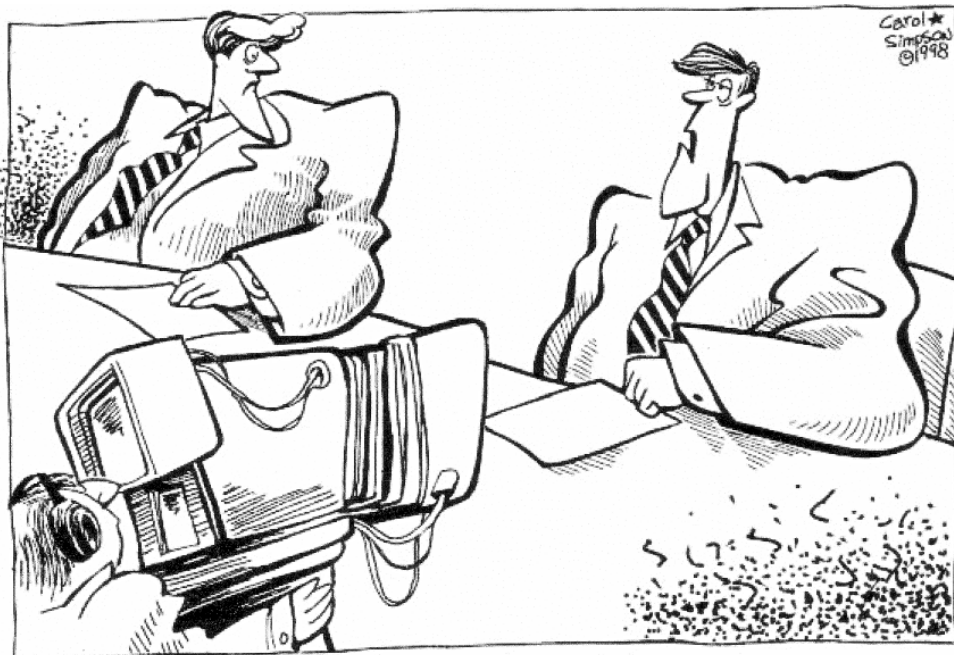
Penrod: The ban on shorts still applies but what will they do if the temperature goes over 30 degrees and a number of conductors turn up for work in shorts? They will have to let these conductors work because if they stood down the conductors and replace the trains with buses, they will be made to look like idiots.

Ichabod: Finally V/Line is conducting a witch hunt to find out who rang the Herald Sun.

**Sparks: In the last issue, mention was made of a conductor stood down over a van door being open when departing a train. What is the update?**

Penrod: One word SACKED!

Rastus and Roscoe: Not only sacked but was humiliated. Certain conductors, AKA the crawlers spread malicious rumours about the conductor's work record.



*"...and in a long overdue market correction,  
stocks of companies with grossly overpaid CEOs plunged sharply."*

Isabel: The work record is not the issue. The law relating to the closing of the Van Door of the train whilst departing is a bad law and must be repealed.

Ichabod: The conductor went to Fair Work Australia and there was a Confidential Settlement. Unfortunately, the conductor did not get reinstated.

Penelope: V/Line has a new policy on disciplinary issues.

**Sparks: What?**

Ichabod: The policy is: If you have to face a disciplinary hearing, you can take a Union Representative, but wait for it. The Union Representative is only allowed to observe, but not defend the member.

**Sparks: Is this a Kangaroo Court?**

Roscoe: They will try but in an incident at a country location where the union representative was told he was only there to observe, he and the person being disciplined got up and walked out of the meeting, leaving the Line Manager with egg on his face.

**Sparks: Once again, we have run out of space. I hope the restructure of Human Resources, results in better understanding of work issues. As regards the wearing of shorts, employees should be allowed to wear them if the weather goes over 28 degrees. Thank you for the conductor coming forward.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say. The employee who fought back at Broadford deserves a medal, but was foolish for not being a union member. Finally, if you have to front a LINE MANAGER for disciplinary reasons, don't turn up!

**STOP PRESS**

*As this issue is going to press, it has been reported that the Chief Executive of V/Line has resigned. The reason, he resigned is over wheel defects on VELOCITY TRAINS. A full report will appear in the next issue.*

## International Transport Workers' News

### **BELGIUM RAIL STRIKE**

6/1/16

**Rail workers began the strike late Tuesday in protest against planned reforms, which the government says would aim to streamline services and make the sector more efficient.**

The CSC-Transcom and CGSP-Cheminots union argue, however, that the government is imposing austerity measures that will lead to job losses, budget cuts and a dismantling of railway infrastructure, at a time when environmentally friendly public transport is essential.

Unions across Belgium initially planned to hold a five-day rail strike, but a backlash of consumer outrage led to a restricted two-day walk-out. As a result, unions in northern Belgium withdrew from the strike.

The Federation of Belgian Enterprises criticized the strike action, calling it “unacceptable, irresponsible and counterproductive,” while arguing that it would have an economic impact and harm the country’s image.

### **Disruption to reach London and Paris**

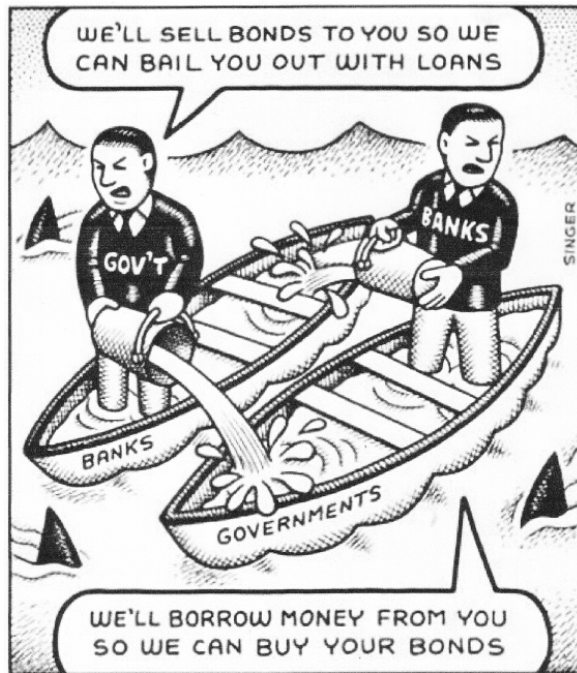
As well as affecting national transport, the walk-out is also set to affect international rail services to and from Belgium. The French Thalys network is expected to be completely shut down, and German high-speed ICE trains will not travel to Belgium.

French high-speed trains will stop before reaching Belgium, while rail services between the Swiss city of Basel and Brussels will end in Luxembourg.

Belgian Rail (SNCB) also said on its website that Eurostar connections to France and Britain will be either cut or severely affected. Rail operators have advised passengers to check online for updates before travelling.

Strikes and labour protests are not a rare occurrence in Belgium. In recent years, thousands of people have taken part in anti-austerity rallies, while road and rail transport has been repeatedly paralysed due to numerous rounds of industrial action.

*ksb/rc (dpa, AP)*



## **Toronto taxi drivers defy mayor as anti-Uber protest rages on**

11/12/15

**TORONTO** – Toronto taxi drivers ignored Mayor John Tory’s pleas to abandon their traffic-snarling protest Wednesday, continuing to block at least one major downtown intersection Wednesday evening.

As many as 2,000 taxis converged on downtown Toronto, driving as slow as five km/h on major roadways en route to city hall in a protest against the city's stance on ride-sharing service Uber.

The protest paralysed downtown traffic, even impeding ambulances around the hospitals on University Avenue.

Tory condemned the protest as "dangerous and disruptive," and asked drivers to call off the protest before the afternoon rush hour.

He encouraged drivers to continue protesting at City Hall but leave traffic unimpeded, a plea that apparently fell on deaf ears as cabs continued blocking the nearby intersection of Queen and Bay streets.

"The point has been made," Tory said. "I don't think it was made in a necessary or appropriate manner, but the point has been made."

Police Chief Mark Saunders said police are allowing protests to continue, but said Wednesday's tactics are self-defeating for tax drivers.

"I'm strongly suggesting that the taxi industry change their playbook," he said. "If they're looking for negative attention that's what's happening right now. I understand the frustration, don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to dismiss that, but there's a proper way of going about it."

[Http://globalnews.ca/news/2389591/tr...-against-uber/](http://globalnews.ca/news/2389591/tr...-against-uber/)

## **IRISH LIGHT RAIL WORKERS' STRIKE**

*11/2/16*

**LUAS (Dublin Light Rail) staff are taking industrial action to win higher wages. This follows a 99 percent vote in favour across four different grades.**

When LUAS was set up in 2004, drivers' wages were deliberately set low because it was predicted that there would be 20 million passengers paying a €1 each for the journey.

By 2009, it was already clear that LUAS was a commercial success. Passenger numbers had grown to 27 million passengers who were paying a lot more than €1 a journey.

The workers at LUAS have never been properly rewarded for their efforts. They were stuck in long five year collective agreements and were denied a right to take industrial action because of a no strike clause.

After waiting patiently for years, the staff finally decided to press for a significant improvement in their wages. The owners of LUAS, Transdev, have made no efforts to meet the workers claim.

The LUAS company can well afford to pay its staff. It is owned by a subsidiary of the giant Violia corporation which has made a fortune from the privatisation of water in other countries.

### STATEMENT OF LUAS DRIVER

“First of all, Luas drivers sympathise with the Luas passengers for the disruption and inconvenience strikes might cause. They all have families and big mortgages so this decision was not taken lightly!

However as Transdev have refused to engage on cost increasing claims for the past 18 months drivers were left with no option but to take this action.

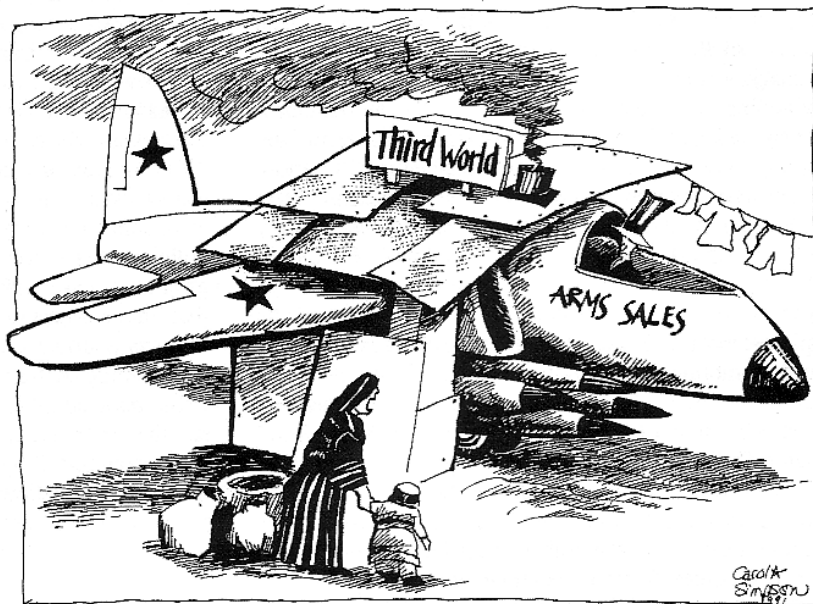
Transdev’s refusal to negotiate a claim set them on the inevitable path to this dispute say the drivers.

That strategy is akin to the ostrich who sticks its head in the sand. If TII are aware of this strategy and condone it, then as owners of the LUAS system they are equally culpable for discommoding 100,000 passengers this Thursday /Friday.

Luas drivers have stated from the outset that there was room to compromise on all aspects of their claim. so now they need to act responsibly as the operator of Luas and take their head out of the sand and engage productively to negotiate the best possible outcome for their organisation.”

Cllr Gino Kenny said: ‘I fully support the striking Luas workers. They set a great example for other workers who have been denied pay increases and faced pay cuts over the past 7-8 years. Since the beginning of the recession public transport costs have increased for customers while private companies such as Transdev are making huge profits.’

*Thanks to People Before Profit*



“IT’S...UH... NICE, BUT WHERE DO WE SLEEP?”

## 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:

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

**MEMBERS' VOICE -Fighting for Membership  
Control of the Union & Direct Action to Fight  
Back!**

**Web Site: [User.tpg.com.au/retepsni/Members](http://User.tpg.com.au/retepsni/Members)  
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bers-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-group/5312490  
43571323?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Members-Voice-RTBU-rank-and-file-group/531249043571323?fref=ts)**







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