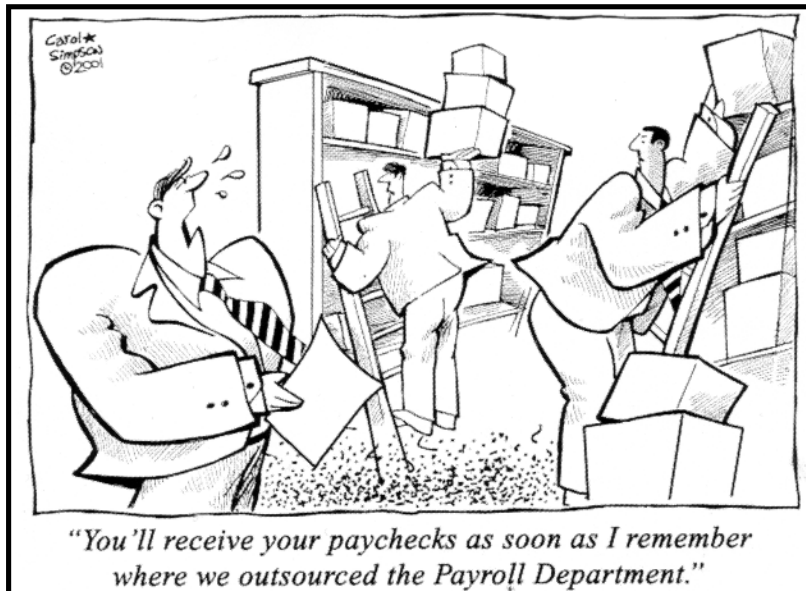


# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**ALP Union Hierarchy Brazenly Helps RailCorp to “Shove Out The Window” Cleaners into the Path of The Privatisation Express! Organise on the Job to form Rank & File Committees to Achieve Membership Control of the Union & Fight O’Farrell!**



Secret Deal to Sell Sydney Buses;

STA Busie News;

Victorian Railway News;

Rank & File Success in PSA;

Train Crew News;

Rail Cleaners & Transit Officers Sellout;

NSW Rail News;

International Transport Workers' News;

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most nefarious news in Rail Corp lately has been the ALP RTBU hierarchy connivance in the outsourcing of station and train cleaning. With the cleaners even being denied any redundancy payment. Whilst there is no guarantee of their conditions following the end of the current enterprise agreement. This latest despicable act of treachery follows on a raft of other recent cave-ins to the Rail Corp bosses and O'Farrell by the union hierarchy. (See article page 5.)

With the Auditor General's Report into Rail Corp demanding cutbacks to allowances and penalties, Rail Corp is likely to include many nasties along these lines in the upcoming Enterprise Agreement. No doubt, the union hierarchy will try to railroad its acceptance amongst the grass roots. (See article page 10.)

To combat this onslaught, it's urgent that rank and file committees are established on the job to push for membership control of the union and to fight back against the O'Farrell rampage. An important inspiration is the success of the Progressive PSA (Public Service Association) rank and file group, which has been pushing for membership control for many years, in recent elections. (See article page 25.)

In State Transit, the most important news lately has been attempts by the CEO and the Transport Minister to terrorise drivers to accept a range of massive cut backs to conditions. Using the threat of privatisation. Has a secret deal already been signed?

Given the union officials sell out of new drivers and existing drivers' wages and conditions in the current enterprise agreement, reliance on the officials to assist the grass roots to fight privatisation is likely to be misguided. Are they keeping the grass roots in the dark about this secret deal? It's an important priority that rank and file committees are formed in the depots to take direct action to hurl back the O'Farrell gauntlet and work to establish membership control of the union. (See articles pages 12 and 16.)

**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.sparksworld.org](http://www.sparksworld.org)**

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**SPARKS WEB SITE - [www.sparkweb.org](http://www.sparkweb.org)**

**MEMBERS' VOICE -**

**[Http://users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/membersvoice](http://users.tpg.com.au/retepsni/membersvoice)**

## **TRAIN CREW NEWS**

### **BMI Targets Train Crews**

A new and worrying issue we are now facing, is that the bosses want us to meet a certain BMI (Body Mass Index) standard. It's likely many train crew members won't meet the standard and will be open to persecution by RailCorp. BMI is your weight x height squared divided by 100. It's not a definite health indicator. It doesn't take out of bone structure, density and genetic muscular attributes. It's unfair and flawed science.

Some other general issues of concern lately have been incidents being recording on workers' personnel files when workers are informed "No Action Taken".

There is also a safety issue with the Waratah Dodge Doors being activated and not being closed. It then becomes a Fire Door issue.

The question whether the Carriage Lockdown on the Waratah Train has been cancelled? Changes to Waratah Train working should be put out in a General Order in Critical Documents.

### **Yellow Marker on Platforms**

A yellow marker is to be put on all platforms due to the movement of the repositioning of the 8 car marker on the front of the platform and guards not being sure they have stopped at the correct position to open his crew door, especially for guards working trains out of their own sector. It is therefore necessary to keep with RailCorp consistency on all Sectors that trains stop in the correct position at all locations. The Yellow Markers be painted on the platform between the 4th and 5th car positions.

The Xmas and New Years Rosters need be given out early to enable crews to organised there time with families over the season.

### **Mortdale**

At Mortdale there are still issues with Tangara train doors closing and the Traction Interlocking not safely closing the passenger doors at Caringbah and guard Keith Sparks being taken off the road.

### **Blacktown**

At Blacktown, a similar issue at Turrumurra where the train was running 10 minutes late and the guard waited approximately 10 seconds and as no one got off the train, he closed the doors then a Blind Passenger attempted to get off the train and was caught in the doors.

### **Flemington**

At Flemington, there is an issue with training and crews not getting their ETR allowances when they have to bring their work bags with them and lift up and lay back are not being paid for training. Main Train are doing exchange trains with Defects train crew. There are trains going back into service after a Fatality without being cleaned. Crew cabs are continually dirty on commencing their running into passenger service.

Some other general issues have been depot meal room and toilets needing to be cleaned on a regular basis at various depots, this impacts on crib times when crew have to clean up before having their crib. 4 & 8 car Oscars are running for up to days 4 with faulty toilets not being fixed.

### **Peak Hours & Central**

The Minister has determined the length of the “Peak Hour” will be morning 0600-1000 then the afternoon/evening 1500-1900. Management wants to have Central Suburban Guard coverage on the Central Suburban Platforms increased. The guards rooms on the Central Suburban Platforms are Standby Rooms, not meal rooms. We have submitted a list of improvements we would need, to see before any time extension can be seriously considered. Among the items required are additional breaks to be rostered “Crib” for any Guard rostered to any one of these rooms for more than the current 3 hour period. Comfort and improved amenity are also included in our submission. It appears management wants Guards providing “Continuous” day wide coverage from all Central Stand By Rooms, which we will strongly resist until our members working conditions are improved.

### **Waratahs**

In regard to the Waratahs, training to equip Guards with the necessary skills to operate the Waratah Train continues. It has been a huge change for Guards moving from the middle to the rear of an eight carriage Suburban Train. There are ongoing issues centred around Station Staff/Guard communication when Boarding Customers Requiring Assistance, Shelter and Security at the ends of platforms, and the handling of dispatch.

*Concerned Guard*



## **THE WALKING DEAD - ARE ZOMBIES RUNNING OUR UNION?**

### *Crimson Coconut*

It's been almost two years since the last RTBU union election. Unfortunately Members Voice was unsuccessful in dislodging the Labor Leadership at that election despite having gained upwards of 40% overall of the contested vote. Since then the O' Farrell Government has been rampaging through the public sector, including the transport sector, cutting jobs and destroying conditions. The union movement with a few exceptions has been largely unable or unwilling to stop these attacks on members despite the Transport Minister having called rail workers "bludgers" and threatened bus drivers with privatisation of their jobs if they did not reduce costs.

During this time Enterprise Agreement 2010 has handed RailCorp management a broad sword with which it has cut a swathe through differing layers of jobs and work practices. This reform process is not yet complete and the 2010 agreement does not end till April 2013.

Within State Transit there are threats to privatise Government Buses. Sydney Ferries and its workforce have already fallen by the wayside having been "franchised" (privatisation by stealth) some 12 months ago. Plans for this reached an advanced state under the previous Labor Government.

So with public transport workers facing the biggest crisis in recent history how have the public transport union leadership responded? Have they been successful at all in blunting the attack on members?

### **Railway Station and Train Cleaning.**

Within the last week the Government announced that despite the continuous reform that had been implemented over the last 10 years the engineering company Transfield had been awarded the contract to manage the newly created transport cleaning division within Transport for NSW. The Union members affected are not happy about this transfer to Transfield. By the end of the year it will bring more uncertainty to their jobs, if they manage to maintain one.

Before this announcement by the NSW Government the RTBU oversaw a huge overall reduction in cleaning staff. Cleaners were unable to complete their daily allotted tasks due to the increased workloads that resulted. Many remain disillusioned and gloomy about the future. Some have stated that they will quit their jobs rather than work for a private contractor. If they decide to stay on with Transfield cleaners will no longer be working as RailCorp employees, though wages and conditions will temporarily be transferred across to the new management. There are no guarantees once the current enterprise agreement terminates in April next year that conditions will remain.

In the case of the cleaners the Union leadership kept most of the detail concerning the changes under wraps. No serious mobilisation of the workforce took place. Consultation with the af-



affected workers has been fleeing and members have suffered what must be called a defeat at the hands of management. Union members are opposed to privatisation.

THE RTBU LEADERSHIP MUST BE MARKED DOWN AS A FAILURE FOR FAILING TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST PRIVATISATION OF CLEANING JOBS AND FAILING TO MOBILISE THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP TO SUPPORT THE CLEANERS. THIS LED TO A DEFEAT FOR IT'S MEMBERS.

### **The Removal of Railway Transit Officers**

The RTBU oversaw the winding back of Transit Officer positions. Some have gained employment in other areas of the railways, whilst others have changed course by entering the NSW Police Force. Large numbers simply left.

While Transit Police are unloved employees due to the nature of their work they are nonetheless employees worthy of protection by the union. They also provided a level of security for other rail employees and members of the public.

There are signs that the security situation has deteriorated since the removal of Transit Officers from trains and stations. Witnesses describe recent events where rail staff have been threatened and harassed by mentally ill members of the public. Calls to the police for assistance from the Security Division have failed to elicit a response from the police who have been preoccupied with more "significant" matters.

Because of the latest reforms there are less staff. Some staff are working alone at remote locations throughout the RailCorp network. This is a significant threat to the safety of those employees. A quick OH&S assessment could justify a return to rail workers working in pairs or groups. However this cannot be justified on “economic” grounds according to some in the union leadership.

THE UNION LEADERSHIP FAIL ON THIS ISSUE FOR NOT SUPPORTING THE JOBS OF TRANSIT OFFICERS AND FAILING TO IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM TO PROTECT THE SAFETY OF IT’S MEMBERS.

### **Democratic Rights and Freedom of Speech**

Recently RailCorp has cracked down on employee’s critically speaking out on issues of importance to rail workers and the public.

In a recent case millions of dollars were wasted hunting down an employee who spilt the beans on a supposedly corrupt CountryLink manager. This is despite employee verification of the shenanigans over a number of years.

A bulletin has been circulated by RailCorp warning that any criticism of Government policy, any comment that is not sanctioned or any publication that brings RailCorp or any of its employees into disrepute will have disciplinary action taken which could lead to dismissal.

This is despite “whistleblower protection” legislation at State and Federal level. Adding to this was a recent circular that had to be signed by employees forbidding the use of electronic devices such as mobile phones and computers in the workplace and the accessing of “social media” websites. This ban extended to use of social media at home to make comment on RailCorp or Government matters.

Next we receive the bombshell circular from the RTBU warning that internal RailCorp email or computer systems could not be used for circulating election material.

“ We are a strong collective Union and want all members to be well informed about their candidates and involved in choosing who will represent them for the next two years”

“However, some members in previous Union elections have used the RailCorp computer email system to send out election information which has resulted in a management reaction against them” Alex Claassens, Branch Secretary.

**The Union bulletin then went on to quote the relevant RailCorp Code of Conduct.**

No doubt that there was also a Union reaction against them as they did not defend the use of members email for union purposes. What is the real difference between circulating bullshit Union bulletins by email or circulating election material?

This bulletin was reinforced by a later RailCorp release warning of the consequences of use of RailCorps’ computer email for Union elections. Was there some collusion here between Management and the Union to stop rank and file members from getting their message out? So much for wanting all members to be well informed. When is too much information too much? When it is not coming from them?

**EBA 2010 states:**

“40.2. Union delegates’ access to the Employer’s facilities

(a) The Employer will allow reasonable access to telephone, computers and accessories, meeting rooms, facsimile, postal, photocopying, e-mail and intranet/internet facilities for the purpose of carrying out work as a Union delegate and consulting with workplace colleagues in accordance with this provision.

(b) The Employer shall provide a notice case for the display of authorised material in each workplace in a readily accessible and visible location.

(c) The Employer provides the above facilities (including access by a Union delegate to Employees) provided usage pertains to the relationship between Employer and Employees, and on the basis

that they are reasonable and do not unduly interfere with the Union delegate's primary duties as an Employee – unless such interruption is authorised by management on site.”

If delegates have these rights then they should be extended to all members/non-members. This is a restriction on freedom of association that is enforced by a union/management agreement. Access to debate and opinion must be shared equally by all. Anything less is dictatorship.

THE RTBU'S BLANKET BAN ON POLITICAL DISCUSSION IS RIDICULOUS AND SHOWS A DEEP MISTRUST OF MEMBERS AND A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY AND POLITICS. POLITICS IS THE STRUGGLE OF CLASSES TO OBTAIN THEIR FAIR SHARE OF THE SPOILS. RAILWORKERS BELONG TO THE WORKING CLASS WHO AT THE MOMENT FACE SOME STARK CHOICES. STIFLING DEBATE OF UNION MEMBERS IS NOT JUST A BASIC DENIAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS BUT A HINDRANCE TO THE EMANCIPATION OF WORKERS. FOR THAT REASON WE HAVE ISSUED THE RTBU LEADERSHIP A FAIL.

#### **Workers Compensation Changes.**

Before the O' Farrell Government changes to Workers Compensation, rail workers and other public transport workers were covered for injury from the time they stepped out their front gate to work until the time they returned back through it. This no longer applies. If you are injured to or from work, if you are assaulted in the train or injured in a car smash you are no longer covered for workers compensation. Workers will have to resort to common law injury claims which can be challenged, possibly costing tens of thousands of dollars.

Previous Workers Compensation claims were no fault claims. It didn't matter much how you were injured. Except if you were under the influence or involved in something illegal you were mostly sure to be covered.

Generally the trade union movement, with a few exceptions, failed to adequately rally against the new legislation by calling stop work meetings of State employees. A union wide workplace campaign never eventuated except for one rally to let off a bit of steam. The majority of workers were never mobilised.

I have no doubts that this legislation could have been stopped by widespread stop work union action and disobedience campaign. Alas, such is the lack leadership in NSW unions that in the end it was easy passage for O'Farrell's Workers Compensation Amendment Bill.



Now several of the public transport unions including the RTBU are examining the options of a separate insurance scheme to cover journeys to and from work. Typical of the union leadership approach of “If you can’t beat em. Join em”.

The ASU is already offering insurance for journey claims.

The prospects of a separate insurance scheme is fraught with danger as insurers motives will be hell bent on keeping claims low or stop them altogether. Employees will end up paying the premiums in one form or another. Why let employers off the hook anyway? You wouldn’t be traveling unless you were going to work for them. Seems employers are responsible for nothing these days.

**THE RTBU FAILS THE TEST ON WORKERS COMPENSATION FOR FAILING TO MOBILISE IT’S WORKFORCE AGAINST CUTS TO WORKERS COMPENSATION. THIS IS ONE THAT GOT AWAY.**

#### **New Medical Standards.**

New medical standards have been “negotiated” for Category 1 and 2 Safety Critical Workers. How many of us were consulted on these changes? The Union leadership saw fit to negotiate with Federal Government representatives and Employers to set new standards for medical assessments. Changes coming into effect January 2013 mostly relate to hearing loss, obesity and sleep apnoea. Will they be used to tighten the screws on rail workers who are the most stringently regulated workforce in Australia?

Every aspect of your private life is regulated by RailCorp. Erectile dysfunction may one day be a factor which rules a rail worker as being “over the hill” and unsuitable for a job. Watch out for the “small arms” inspectors.

It is widely known in medical circles that RailCorp’s work practices are the main contributor to obesity, sleep apnoea and other indicators of morbidity. Shift work and poor rostering practices are the killers. To blame workers for not being ship-shape is like blaming someone for inadvertently drinking poison rather than blaming the person who administered it (the poisoner).

Instead of agreeing to these punitive measures and after the fact medical procedures the union should have been pushing for the implementation of preventative measures. These would have a better outcome for their members.

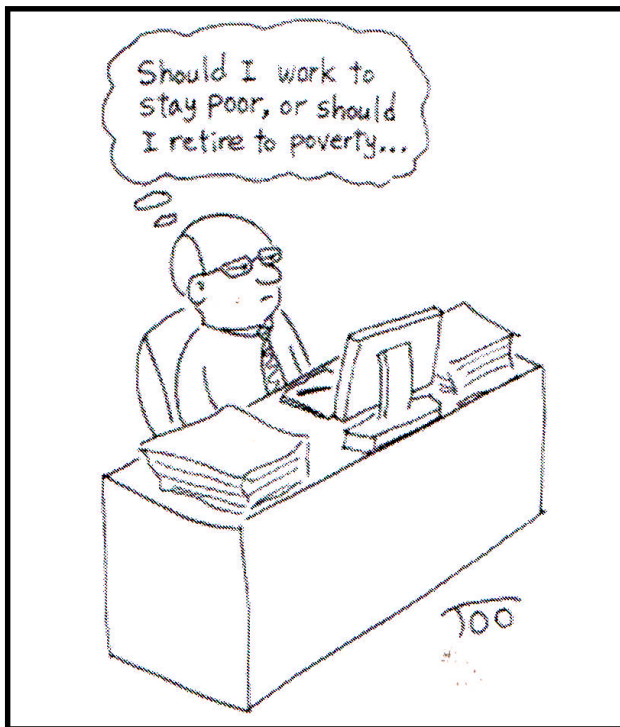
We call for subsidised staff canteens with decent food, rather than the fat and salt laden foods available through retail outlets. At larger depots this could be a revenue neutral exercise for RailCorp. The savings would come through reduced medical diagnosis and better health and happiness for employees.

We call for staff gymnasiums at major points throughout the network so that a culture of exercise becomes easier to achieve and the level of fitness is more easily attainable.

We call for ridiculous rostering practices to end. Roster Clerks need to understand the medical implications of what they are doing.

Instead, the Union leadership has implemented the “can’t beat em, join em” doctrine again by setting up with the help of RT Health Fund a “Fit, Healthy and United” road show. This “road

show” (come circus) will measure the BMI, blood pressure, blood sugar etc of rail employees. ONCE AGAIN THE RTBU HAS FAILED IN IT’S DUTY TO MEMBERS BY AGREEING TO A PUNITIVE APPROACH TO MEMBERS FITNESS AT WORK. THE BLAME FOR THE LEVEL OF FITNESS OF IT’S EMPLOYEES RESTS SOLELY WITH THE WORK PRACTICES AND AMENITIES PROVIDED BY RAILCORP. THE UNION LEADERSHIP ONCE AGAIN HAS FAILED BECAUSE IT LET MANAGEMENT OFF THE HOOK AND PUT THE ONUS FOR HEALTH BACK ON IT’S MEMBERS.



This small sample of expedient solutions by the RTBU leadership show that they cannot manage in the interest of members. This along with large numbers of employees illegally “acting up in grade” because of their relationship with this or that manager or the Union, continued blatant breaches of the EBA by management without consequence, restrictions on when leave can be taken, all at the whim of local managers, job appointments that are often decided by relationship rather than merit all point to a union which is not effective at addressing the real concerns of members.

The abolition of the Transport Appeals Board also (although not a perfect instrument), with the Union as the overseer of it’s death, is just one more obstacle on the road to justice for workers pursuing that route.

#### **A Forecast of Further Attacks on Working Conditions**

The latest NSW Auditor General’s report into RailCorp believes that overtime rates are too high. But instead of cutting overtime they suggest attacking working conditions.

They believe that \$millions can be saved by ridding RailCorp employees of penalty rates and allowances. (IE weekend penalties, shift penalties, Leave Loading, overtime penalties, travel and meal allowances etc). I’m sure these are the things that are going to be up for grabs at the next EBA negotiations - if not before, if Barry O’Farrell get his own way.

Also the potential for job losses through the formation of Sydney Trains and Country Trains is enormous. There has been little consultation with those affected by this reform by either the Union or Management. Nobody knows where this is going, but going it is.

The Union leadership these days sees itself as a quasi arm of RailCorp Management, selling negotiated positions to those on the shop floor and hosing down dissenters.

The road ahead is a hard road. Continuous reform over a number of years is taking its toll. Expect the reform process to accelerate from this point....

UNLESS we make stand and fight back the tide of right wing reform will sweep us all up.

### **What can we do to stop O'Farrell's Anti-Worker Crusade?**

The RTBU and other transport unions will be weakened considerably and will be left with little credibility if they fail to protect workers against O'Farrell's planned onslaught.

The Union leadership needs to be out talking to members and listening to them. It should be setting up local committee's in workplaces which can be mobilised against any attack against members. Regular workplace meetings which respect and follow up input from ordinary members needs to be taking place in all workplaces.

If this does not happen, start your own Rank and File Committee. Use this to pressure the union to take some action. Some actions may be possible by an organised group.

In recent Public Service Association elections, the old corrupt Labor Party Officials were replaced by a rank and file group within the union, the Progressive Public Service Association (the PPSA). They were able to garner 54% of the vote on a platform of democratising the union from the bottom up, previous union leadership corruption and involving members in the decision making process. Most importantly they pledged to fight back against the public sector cuts, something the previous leadership failed to do. This is one of the most exciting developments in the NSW trade union movement in recent times.

Why exciting? Because it shows that it CAN be done. It's not an easy task to throw out the incumbents, it takes years of organising. Sometimes there are defeats, sometimes disappointment. But it CAN be done! With ORGANISATION it can be done.

We urge those RTBU members voting for candidates in the upcoming elections to carefully consider their vote. Vote for candidates who are not part of the party machine but candidates who put members first and those that promote the voice of ordinary members. The member's voice, not some preconceived idea about what they need or want.

Member's Voice did not succeed at first attempt in tipping the scales in favour of ordinary members. But you can be sure that we are not dead, as some people have suggested. We aim to continue to build and reinvigorate a grass roots movement which has to be part of a much bigger project. A project that has to rid the RTBU of party hacks and spivs that answer to no one.

We need to do this rather than finding ourselves on our knees somewhere down the track. "It's always better to have fought and lost than never have fought at all". Now is the time for that fight, if ever there was one.

## BUS NEWS

*by the Transport Scrutinizer.*

### **STA THREATENS TO INTRODUCE HARSH NEW MEASURES TO ATTACK WORKERS' RIGHTS.**

In the “interests of becoming more competitive with the private bus industry” harsh attacks on the employment conditions of STA workers are on the way unless the RTBU and the membership stand united and defend their current rights. It is quite obvious to me that STA management has little to no idea of the private bus industry and uses false assumptions to scare its workers into accepting new draconian policies because “the private bus industry works this way”. I for one am fed up with this utter stupidity because having 10 years previous private bus employment I know what is and what is not. I do not wish to appear to be an apologist for privatisation as I assure you I am not. The STA and its predecessors have operated tram and bus services since 1879 and there is no reason to change this. What I will do here is give our readers an idea of the general conditions that private bus drivers work in so you have an idea of it. Compared to the STA’s scare campaign this is a tame industry.

**EMPLOYMENT** — Full time drivers are usually started as casuals during the probation period, or, drivers may apply to be casual.

**PAY, LEAVE, UNIFORMS, FREE TRAVEL.** — Pay is about \$2 an hour less than STA. Bendi allowance is nowhere near as good as STA. Dual capacity allowance is paid for shifts where fares are taken and is shown on payslips. STA doesn’t pay this. If it did it would show on your payslip. Penalties differ slightly as the awards are different but the end result is the same.

Annual leave is only 4 weeks, sick pay is between 8 & 12 days

Super is paid by employer as with STA.

Uniforms are provided.

Free travel on company services generally granted for employees. Some bus companies also include family on passes.

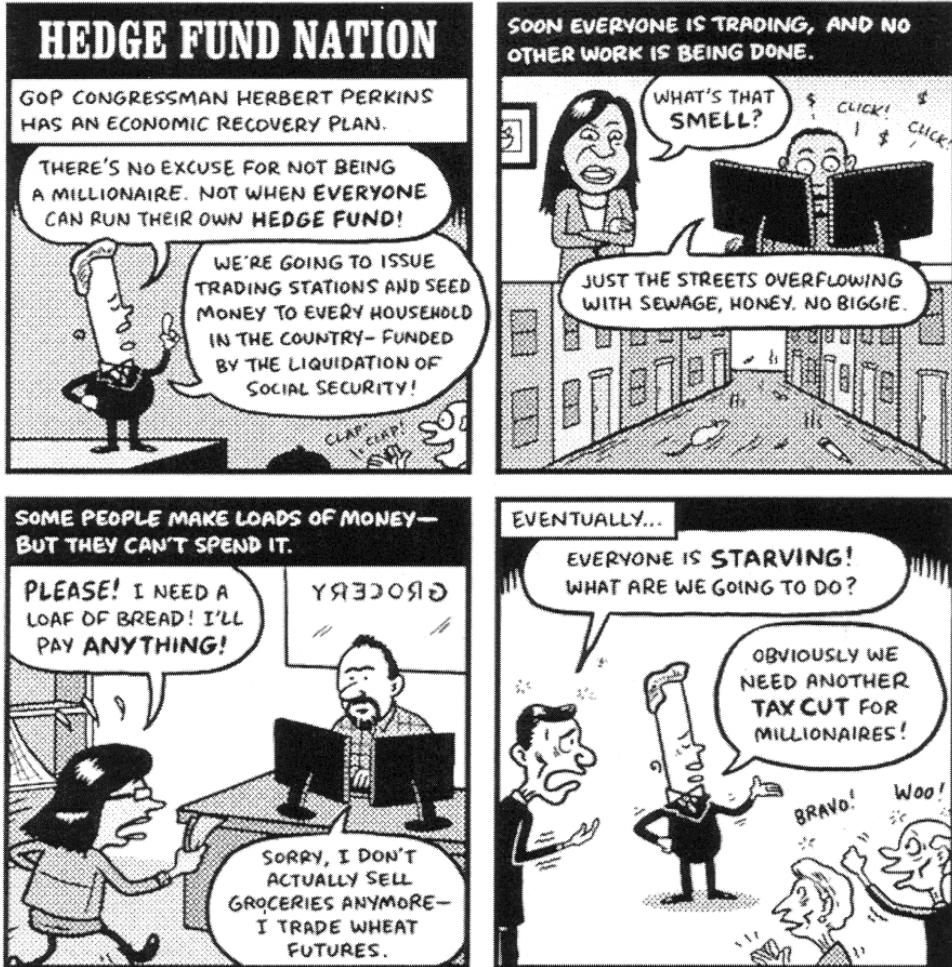
**MANAGEMENT**—Large companies have a head office with a small amount of office, operations and mechanical staff at depots. Small companies have only basic staff running the depot. Good or bad as the companies may be **THERE ARE CERTAINLY NO EMPIRES AT THE DEPOTS.**

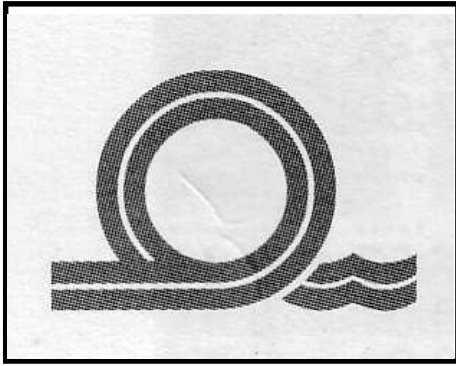
**SHIFTS** — Normal services are covered by full-time drivers and can be covered by casuals if required. School specials and charters including rail charters are covered by full time and casual as rostered keeping in mind the need to maintain route services generally with full time drivers.

BUSES — None of the segregation of buses at certain depots unlike STA. With the exception of certain types of manual buses most are autos and in this case if you claim to be a driver then you drive what you are given. Mechanical staff will show you how if you are not sure. These days buses are usually modern, clean and free of vandalism as they are cleaned after every shift by either the driver or a cleaner.

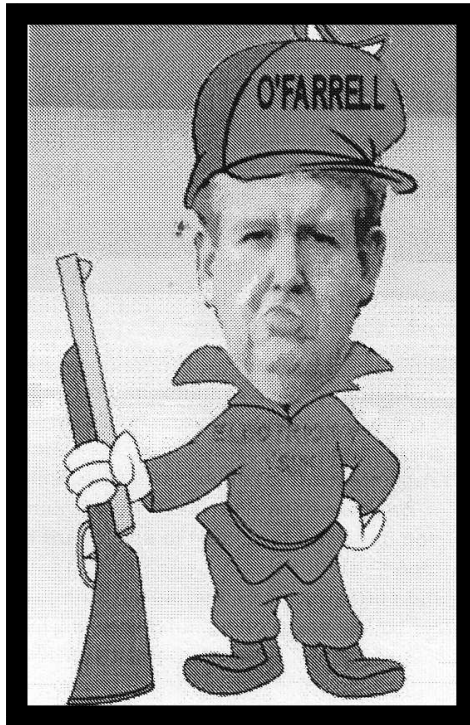
The STA would have you believe that conditions are worse than this in order to bring harsh changes of their own. At present STA workers have the best conditions, but if we let it all change, we will have the worst in the history of any modern day service.

WORKERS UNITE!!!





### **THE LIBERAL PARTY: MARKETING COMPANY FOR BIG BUSINESS**



One of our Sparks “moles” has been masquerading for many years as the most rightwing neo liberal economist in the NSW Premiers Dept, fawned upon by both ALP and Liberal politicians and big bosses from the corporate world. We are delighted to report that he has

recently been successful in accessing the offices of O’Farrell Govt. Ministers, equipped with the latest in our arsenal of bugging technology. Thanks to our moles code named James and Jane Bond in ASIO and the Federal Police, who have achieved senior positions.

As a result, our agent has been able to monitor the telephone conversations between O’Farrell Govt. ministers and their big business and media mates. We are providing transcripts of these conversations to our readers exposing the corporate criminal “underbelly” of the O’Farrell Govt.

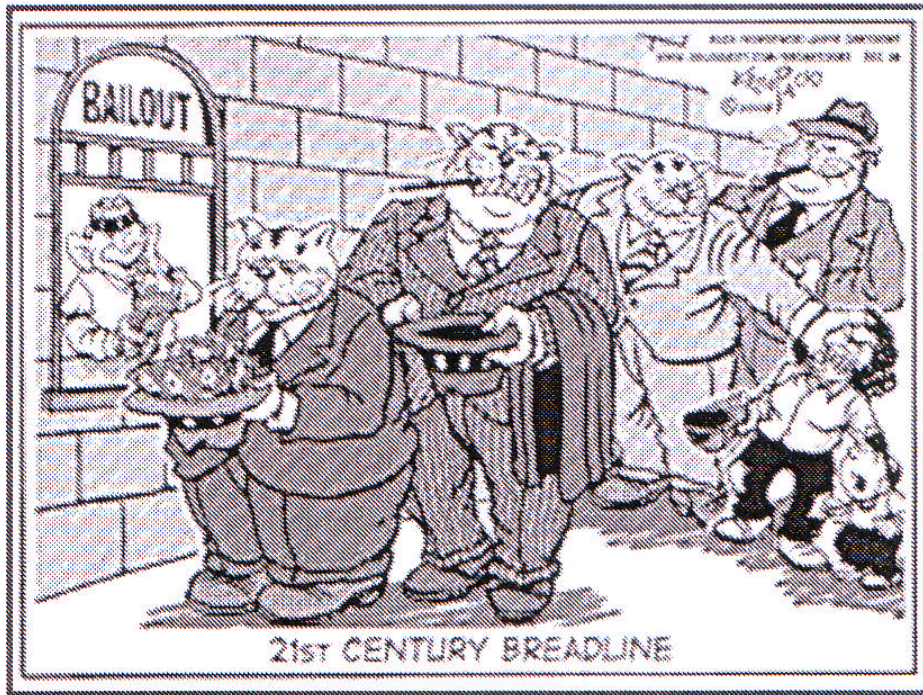
### **“CAUGHT IN THE CORNER CONVERSATIONS WITH BIG BUSINESS”**

*O’Farrell: What’s the state of our coffers?*

*Minister of Transport Berejiklian: We have been saving heaps from cutting every corner in the STA. However, we have gone as far we can with restricting the issuing of uniform clothes.*

*O’Farrell: Ok. All the old, dirty, moth eaten uniform clothes lying around, hand them in to STA drivers!*

*O’Farrell: How are the STA mechanics taking our cutbacks?*



*Minister of Transport Berejiklian: They don't seem to be squealing that much about the loss of weekend overtime. We've also stopped them going on their little jaunts.*

*O'Farrell: Put them on the tyre rack!*

*O'Farrell: Did MacQuarie Bank ring back about the Liberal Party donations?*

*Transport Minister Berejiklian: Yes. They say they're delaying, until they know the exact percentage of the proposed tollway revenue they will receive with agreement to a user pays system.*

*O'Farrell: What can you do about encouraging more car usage by commuters? Mac Bank Boys are desperate for a profits boost.*

*Minister of Transport Berejiklian: We'll use the excuse of the construction of a second Harbour Tunnel to close railway stations and cut out train services.*

*O'Farrell: Alan, can you do a mate a favour? We need a spiel bagging public sector workers for going on illegal strikes.*

*Alan Jones: Sure thing Barry! I'll even say the sooner it's all privatised the better!*

*O'Farrell's Secretary: Barry, I have Jerome Le Conte, Veolia CEO from France on the line for you.*

*O'Farrell: Put him through.*

*Le Conte: Barry, you're been far too generous with the sale price for Sydney Buses. What will people think?*

*O'Farrell: We have the balance of power in Parliament and the Media in our pocket. Who cares? We'll get rid of those public sector workers.*

*Le Conte: They'll be surprised what we have in store for them, after a very brief honeymoon!*

## S.T.A. BUSIE NEWS

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

#### Secret Deal To Sell Sydney Buses?

##### **Sparks: What's the latest on the privatisation front?**

Waverley Busie: According to unconfirmed sources, O'Farrell has already signed a contract with Veolia to sell Sydney Buses for \$880 million, with this sum the red buses are no doubt included. However, Veolia isn't interested in Newcastle Buses. Under Veolia, we are set to face many cut backs to our conditions such as reduced sick leave entitlements, no more broken shifts, cuts to penalty rates, rotating shifts, etc. Despite the illusions some drivers hold that Veolia is less harsh than the STA in how they treat their workers. Their ultimate goal would be breaking down our rosters and gaining full control. If you don't like it, the only option for you will be to leave. This privatisation process will lead to the collapse in workers' conditions in industries with both public and private sectors. Where currently the public sector helps maintain conditions for the private sector. We would go down the same road in minimising conditions as the railways, hospitality and the Fire Brigade. Watch this space.

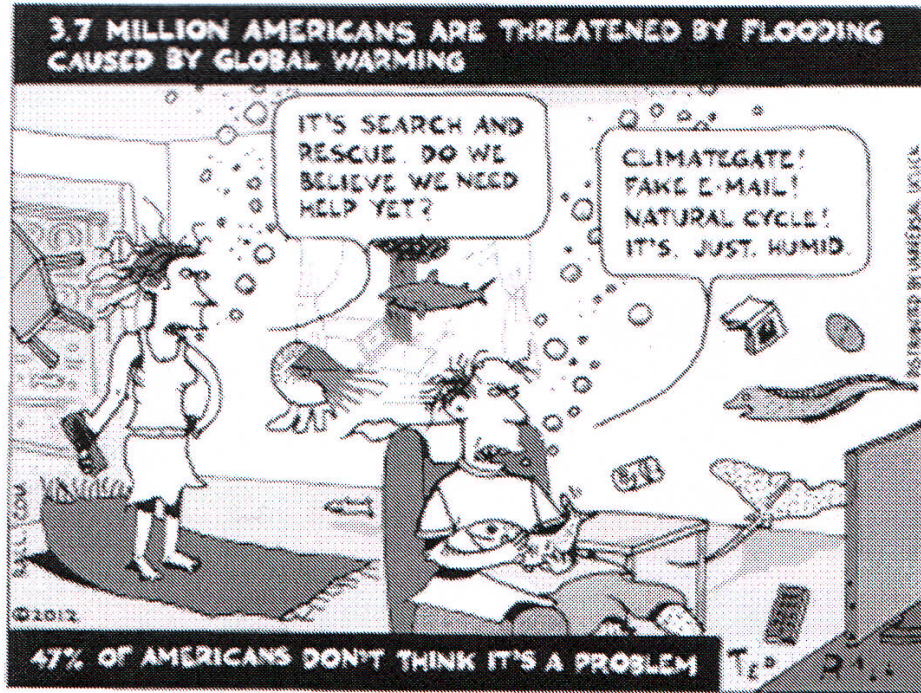
##### **Sparks: What are your views on the O'Farrell Govt's transport policy?**

WB: As a result of such motives as the filling the coffers of big business such as the MacQuarie Bank, seeking votes in the country electorates and wanting to get rid of unions, the Govt. is stealing money from workers to construct more motor tollway freeways. However, Mike Baird admitted on ABC radio recently that the O'Farrell Govt. had found an additional \$100 Billion "lying around", undermining its credibility. In the papers, the headlines spread the furphy that it's going on a \$100 Billion spending spree on transport infrastructure. This is a hell of a lot of money. This approach will just put more cars on the road and create more traffic congestion. It's just a waste of money. In the media recently, experts have said O'Farrell and Greiner are way out of kilt with their splurging on new tollways.

What should be done is expenditure on resurfacing roads, signs and other road improvements which would greatly enhance traffic flow around the city, without bringing more cars into the city and major upgrading of public transport.

In 1976, the city of Toronto in Canada stopped the construction of new roads as it would just encourage people to put more cars on the roads. It currently has a much better public transport system than in Sydney. Back when Nick Greiner was the Premier and pushing for the con-





struction of the M2 and other highways, I wrote two letters to Bruce Baird, the then Transport Minister pointing out the virtues for enhancing public transport usage with the construction of an O-Bahn in Sydney, like which exists in Adelaide. I didn't receive any response to the main issue. A lesson I've learnt, is that if you want to write letters to the Transport Minister, you should focus on one issue per letter. At the time there was a big protest about plans for the construction of the M2. Greiner disregarded the O-Bahn option and proceeded with the M2 and the Eastern Distributor, as well which were highly costly. If you want to further research the effectiveness of the O-Bahn for public transport, just google O-Bahn Adelaide.

**Sparks: What are your thoughts on how bus drivers' wages compare to other groups in the public sector?**

WB: Other groups in the NSW public sector are receiving preferential treatment from the O'Farrell Govt. The police have been awarded a 12 ½ % pay rise over 3 years. The NSW Fire Brigades have also received a significant pay rise.

A recent ABC Radio programme "Background Briefing" has highlighted to me another dimension of this "preferential treatment" of police, so as to facilitate O'Farrell dirty work. It was an investigation of the recent police killing of a young Brazilian tourist in the City involving dirty tactics. The chief witness complained of the police involved as acting like thugs. Whilst, the young Brazilian who had been tazered numerous times, suffocated due to heavy handed police action. Rather than coming out against the police involved and taking severe

action, the Govt. has supported them. Apparently to be seen in the media as “getting on side” with police.

In contrast our wages have gone backward as a result of the Govt’s “Austerity Drive”, which I call a “Hostility Drive”. Both private and public sector bus drivers need to put aside their differences and hold a meeting to develop a strategy to fight the O’Farrell attacks. In Brisbane, the Campbell Newman Govt. is willing to do the same thing. Whilst conservative Governments are all taking an increasingly Thatcherite direction. Flogging off assets and running services to make money due to the demands of Big Business. Whilst Thatcher was notorious for selling off public housing.

**Sparks: What’s the latest with the QLD Liberal Govt’s cutbacks to the public sector?**

WB: The job losses associated with the cut backs to the Qld public sector which occurred prior to the new wave of deeper cuts commencing from 1/9/12 have had severe consequences for some workers. Two people committed suicide and one suffered a heart attack following being told they no longer had jobs anymore. It’s been documented. With workers now facing even more severe cuts, there is likely to be even more fatalities. So in NSW there is a likelihood of fatalities in the wake of O’Farrell’s onslaught against public sector workers’ jobs.

**Sparks: What’s the situation with the uniform?**

WB: We are facing a continuing shortage of parts of the uniform. Currently there is a shortage of new boots. Whilst, some drivers are wearing just the vest or part of the uniform or their normal clothes. Contributing to this situation was a hold up in deliveries of the uniform by the suppliers.

There has now been a new twist in the uniform saga. According to a recent union leaflet, the STA is intending to pay us an allowance of between \$280 to \$350 to purchase the uniform. We will have to shop for the uniform and keep the receipts to be reimbursed. Why aren’t we paid for the time shopping for the clothes? The STA’s handling of the issue is wrong. It’s confusing, demoralising and frustrating. It definitely shows a lack of direction by the bosses.

**Sparks: What’s the latest with the depot?**

WB: As far as I’m aware there has been no upgrading of the depot buildings for over 30 years. Only some touching up has occurred. The depot buildings are quite rundown. The STA’s plan is to refurbish the main building. What had been our meal room on the ground floor, will become offices for the bosses. Despite many offices already located there. As they intend to close Strawberry Hills. Will it be offices for STA or Veolia bosses? Our locker room will also remain on the ground floor. Whilst on the first floor, a new kitchen and canteen will be built for us. How come the STA is able to pay for these extensive renovations, when it claims to be short of money?

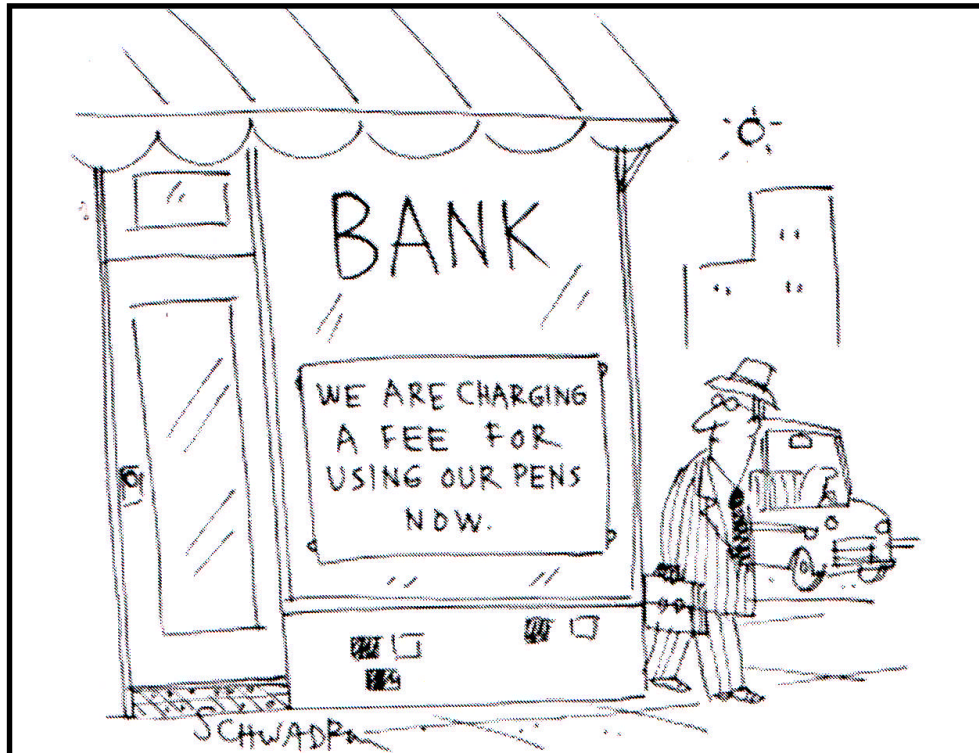
**Sparks: How is the STA’s economy drive progressing?**

WB: On my way home recently, I noticed an inspector in his van shuffling a lot of papers. He mentioned that the paperwork was associated with the STA’s cutbacks to lower management jobs. Each paper related to the options in the event of the abolishing of his job: taking redundancy or coming back to the STA as a driver. Intriguingly I noticed recently a lot “brown en-

velops” from personnel section to be distributed to admin. staff at Waverley apparently regarding job applications for readvertised positions.

In carrying out these cutbacks of positions, the STA doesn't think of the consequences. If the green machines break down or there is a bus accident or a fight on a bus, there are no inspectors available to help with these problems. Many drivers are unaware of the extent of the authority of inspectors. Instead of intervention by the inspectors when problems arise, the bosses want to just rely on inadequate electronic fixes such as GPS and us contacting the radio room. In the case of the radio room, this is one sector which staffing has been increased. In the case of the cutbacks to mechanical section staffing, I have seen bus break downs everywhere. Recently, after working Saturday and Sunday, I noticed less buses on the road.

One theory which explains this reduction, is that management staff who supervise budget allocations, situated at Pt. Botany, are behind this arbitrary action to save dollars. They can make long term changes, but also short term, even by the end of the day. These management personnel just rely on information provided by consultants and want to wash their hands of everything. What a false economy! Following the implementation of these cuts, it may look good in regard to costs saving for the first 6 to 9 months, but you will then see the reverse happening. With less inspectors, drivers will be in dire straits. Whilst O'Farrell fiddles, the buses will burn!



**Sparks: What are your thoughts of the outlook of the STA higher bosses to staff?**

WB: Their general approach seems that we are held responsible for the running of our jobs. We have been receiving a constant flow of notices. By this means, the bosses are saying this is what you should know and we are therefore held responsible. An example of this approach is in regard to overtime. We now have to keep dockets showing our late running. I know it's not always legit in regard to drivers claiming for overtime, but in reality the bosses are sneaking into every corner of our job to save money.

With the recent introduction of the new roster as of 1st October, some drivers are being targeted with a merry go round in their jobs. A handful of new drivers at Waverley are being sent to Port Botany. East Sydney depots are receiving 6-7 drivers from other depots. This initiative is likely to cause much disgruntlement amongst those drivers targeted. Whilst, the previous practice has always been that you are assigned to the depot of your choice and you remain there. I think we are seeing a rekindling of the game management played due to Liberal manipulation of the STA during the Nick Greiner Government.

I have also noticed an ever more colder approach to us by the STA, they are no longer supporting us in any way. Recently, they stopped funding depot games clubs. They are no longer proud of us and have the attitude that you do what you are told or you get the sack!

According to our union rep Wendy there has been a bit of good news due to grass roots action. Grass roots activists launched a petition complaining about harassment by lower echelon admin STA staff of drivers over minor glitches. Following the presentation of the petition to the bosses, things have calmed down. People are now being treated as people. I was recently speaking to the union officials who mentioned that the boss at Burwood has a jack booted approach and is not heeding the warning signs, which management at Waverley has taken.

On another front, there has also been some good news. Transport NSW bureaucrats had wanted to cut out our entitlements to various loadings. We have won a reprieve. As a Govt. authority told them that such action would be illegal. So they have had to back off.

**Sparks: What's the latest with Veolia?**

WB: The other day I was talking to a Veolia driver. He complained to me about the new ticketing system they now have. It's very slow. He considers the previous system, which was the same as the current STA ticketing system was much more reliable. You can imagine what it could be like working under these people.

**Sparks: What's happening with the new ticketing system?**

WB: I have heard that there will soon be a new rollout of aerials for all buses associated with the introduction of the new smart card ticketing system. Will it be similar to the new Veolia ticketing system – another bee in a bottle.

**BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: What's the latest with the bosses at Burwood?**

Burwood Driver: In recent weeks, the depot manager held a BBQ where we were to be advised about various changes in the STA. However, it was completely boycotted by drivers. As we considered we would be just lied to and placated to makes us feel okay. As occurred with

the shed drivers regarding restructuring of their job 12 months ago which led to the loss of 2-3-4 shed drivers at depots across the STA. One change I heard about, was in regard to Tempe Depot. Originally when it was set up, drivers were encouraged to transfer there, as it would be the base of red buses, which have no fares collecting. Now, the bosses want to eliminate 2 red bus runs from the depot to be replaced by 2 blue bus runs. We have been facing a wave of harassment by the bosses over minor infringements with many drivers being threatened with the sack. As a result, morale currently is very low at Burwood. There is a lot of anger of this new STA policy involving drivers being suddenly sent to foreign depots to work. Recently 2 drivers doing PM shifts returned from their runs after depot admin staff had left. They suddenly discovered they had to work at Kingsgrove the next day! On the positive side, an initiative by the STA which helps a bit those who have to work at foreign depots and do unfamiliar runs is the installation of the Thoreb screens on the B12 and red buses, which shows up bus stop locations and other info.

**Sparks: What's the situation with Admin and Lower Management staff?**

BD: In our region all corridor supervisor jobs have been abolished. Whilst 30 admin positions have been abolished. However, those who lost their positions can apply for 21 new positions which have been created.

**Sparks: How things with the refuelers?**

BD: 12 months ago the shed driver position was restructured, so that people from the maintenance section took over the refuelling function, previously performed by shed drivers. We are facing a serious safety issue regarding the refuelers. It was highlighted recently, when due to an absence there was no one to do the refueler job and the bosses demanded that the shed driver doing the night shift also do refuelling. The shed driver refused to do the extra job and demanded that the bosses fill the vacant position. With often 25 buses waiting to be refuelled, requiring 200 litres of fuel per bus, and the shed driver being busy with his bus despatching and other work, there is simply no time to do safe refuelling.

**LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: What's the latest with the STA bosses?**

Leichhardt Busie: The most important issue has been the demands for various changes that the STA CEO has been pushing. With threats of privatisation if we don't cave in. Latest news is that the union has formally rejected agreement to all the changes via a letter sent to the STA. Some of the most malicious changes include extending the end of broken shifts from 5.30 pm to 8.30pm; eliminating of our RDO, employment of casuals on DOC's, sickies and recreational leave; reduction of our holidays by one week and the reduction from 10 minutes to 5 minutes for the layover period following the end of one run and the start of another. With the change to the broken shifts, the bosses want to eliminate AM and Mid day shifts which will adversely affect drivers with family responsibilities. With these changes, the STA is creating a nice package for privatisation. It's obvious we must stick together in regard to fighting privatisation. However, a problem we face today is that many drivers just want to look after their own patch. Rather than looking at the big picture and taking large scale collective action to fight the onslaught.

## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In issue 138 mention was made of the Catering Manager picking on Conductors for minor shortfalls in Buffet Cars. In this issue once again Conductors, Head Office staff and Drivers will discuss Catering at V/Line. As in previous issues of Sparks, names have been changed.*

### **Sparks: Can you give us a brief history on V/Line catering?**

Clarence: Years ago Catering on V/Line trains was run by the Trading and Catering Department. In 1993, as a result of Kennett's Transport reforms, Multi Skilling was introduced whereby Conductors performed Catering Duties. Displace Catering Staff who did not take a redundancy package were trained as Conductors.

Jethro: This was agreed to by the Union so as private contractors would not be employed on the trains.

Sheona: Also where a train goes over a certain distance, a Buffet Car has to be provided. This is a Department of Transport rule.

Clarence: This has worked well for the last eighteen years. Also some Conductors who were too nervous to work in a Buffet Car could swap out of Catering Duties and work in Conductor Duties. In fact until 2008, we had a B roster of which 60% of this roster were jobs which were Buffet duties, and the Conductors on this roster were dedicated to the Buffet duties. The reasons this roster was discontinued was discussed in issue 142.

Jethro: In 2006 a Point of Sale System or DOS was introduced on the trains which is similar to what CountryLink uses.

Sheona: In 2000, there was reshuffle of Managers and a Manager was brought into Head Office as Conductor Manager. The previous manager was placed in charge of on train Catering.

### **Sparks: At this point our readers would like to know how this person became on train manager.**

Clarence: This person was a Conductor and he was able to be promoted because he could convince the managers that he would be a Conductor Trainer.

Sheona: In 2000 when a Conductor Manager was appointed it is alleged that this person would run to Head Office saying the manager did not know how to supervise Conductors and that he would do a better job. Eventually the Conductor manager was moved to another position and this person became the On Train Manager.

Clarence: This person also used to train Conductors. The new people would commence training and if he took a dislike to a particular person, he would make sure that this person would fail ticket checking and would be terminated.

Rastus and Roscoe: Being drivers we also have a story about this person. In 2000 the son of a driver was in his Conductors class. He failed tickets on the first attempt. He sat for the exam again and failed by two marks below the pass which was 85%.

Roscoe: He was terminated. His father went to the regional manager to see if his son could do an oral test. The manager said the Trainer did not want this person as a Conductor.

Rastas: His father tried to see this trainer to ask him where his son failed in tickets but this person avoided this driver for months. When confronted, this person denied he picked on his son.

Clarence: When Conductor trainers were introduced, he made sure his yes men were appointed to these positions.

Jethro: One Conductor applied for the position. He was not interviewed. The union got him an interview, but he was not successful. The trainer took a dislike to the union delegate.

Clarence: As a Catering Manager, he treated his employees like dirt. He extends their shifts for his PEP talks. They are paid for his meetings, but after working a shift, you just want to go home.

**Sparks: Is this person one of the people who forced a manager to resign at Southern Cross?**

Rastus and Roscoe: Yes, he was. This was discussed in issues 139 and 140 of Sparks.

Clarence: Yes, he was on stress leave and as soon as the manager was removed, he returned.

Rastus: The Department ran okay, while he was away. As I said in issue 139, get rid of him. We drivers, said we wondered whether he was pulling a ploy for a disability termination.

Clarence: Recently a Conductor was asked to see the Conductor Manager over Buffet short falls. They said he was giving away too many promotions.

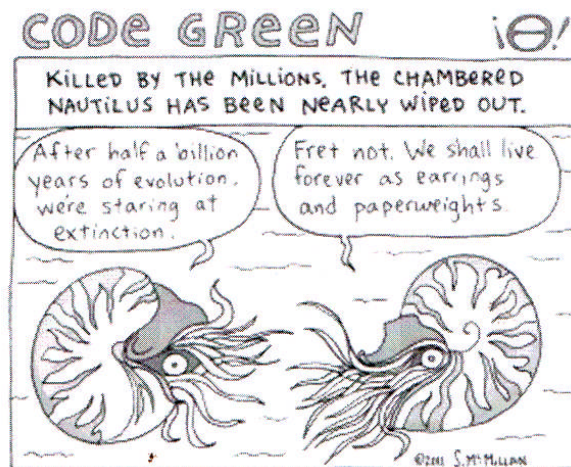
Jethro: What upsets the Conductors was when he fronted this manager, there was a person from Human Resources. The manager for Conductors should have sorted this matter out alone.

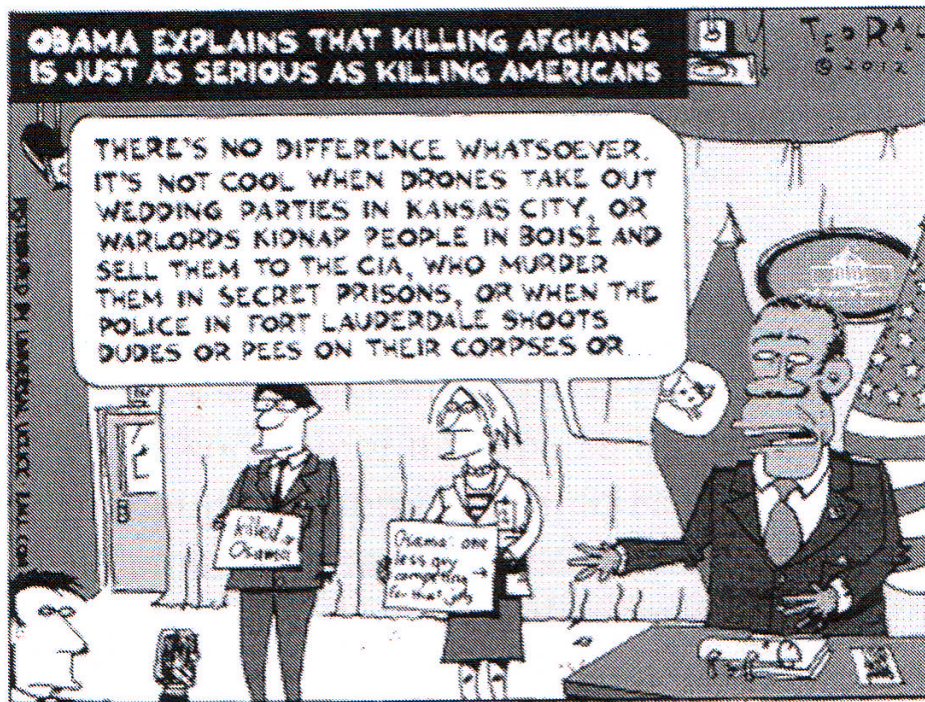
Rastus: We wonder why this person from Human Resources was at the interview. If the Conductor was doing the promotions as advertised on the Price Board, there is no theft. The Conductor was doing his job.

Roscoe: As we said in issue 134, we drivers consider Human Resources as bludgers. Was this person at the interview, so as to justify her job?

Clarence: The Conductor was devastated. This manager said the Conductor was doing too many promotions. He may have been doing too many promotions, but at least he made an effort to sell the stock. At least the perishable stock would not have to be thrown out.

Jethro: This Conductor is a hard worker and would help management, if they were having trouble running trains.





Rastus and Roscoe: Some of our drivers saw this Conductor working whilst travelling passenger and think he was a credit to V/Line.

Clarence: A couple of weeks ago, one of the Staff Clerks asked this Conductor when signing on, if he would change his shift. It was a Buffet shift and he would have to extend his shift. The Conductor agreed to help. The Catering Manager was behind the Staff Clerk. The Staff Clerk said to this person, if this Conductor had not changed his shift, the Buffet would not operate.

**Sparks: Did the Manager thank the Conductor?**

Clarence: No!

Rastus: You think he would have thanked him, but being the PIG he is you would not expect it.

Roscoe: It is obvious this Conductor would help out by having him in over the promotions was wrong. This Catering Manager has nothing better to do.

**Sparks: In concluding, it is obvious that the Conductors hate the On Train Manager. Also he is taking them to task on minor issues. He should be removed.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say. We drivers say to the Catering Manager GET OUT! The department would run better without him. We drivers don't like him over the way he removed a manager and how he failed the son of one of our drivers in ticket checking. Finally, a message to Conductors. If you have to front the Conductor Manager over shortages in Buffets and if HUMAN RESOURCES are there. WALKOUT!



## Rank and File Takes Control of the PSA!

**A recent election in the 42 000 strong NSW Public Service Association (PSA) saw a rank and file group of members and delegates called the Progressive PSA (PPSA) secure a stunning victory. The PPSA captured the top position of General Secretary when their candidate Anne Gardiner deposed the long serving incumbent John Cahill. The PPSA also won all 45 delegate positions on the PSA Central Council, giving them control of the union.**

The PPSA were able to win all 45 delegates to Central Council with 57% of the vote because prior to the last PSA election in 2008 the leadership team abolished the democratic proportional representation method and replaced it with a 'winner takes all' system of bloc voting. This undemocratic change was introduced to remove the PPSA from having any representation on Central Council because the old leadership group was frightened by growing membership support for the PPSA. That change has now turned around to bite the former ruling group as they are now left with no delegates on Central Council, although they narrowly retained a majority of positions on the Executive. The PPSA has pledged to restore proportional representation after consulting with the membership.

The Progressives campaigned on a platform of putting power in the hands of members and delegates by consulting widely and involving members in an industrial campaign to combat O'Farrell's attacks on the public sector. Members became increasingly frustrated with the former leadership group's failure to develop an industrial strategy or involve members in an organised campaign of mass action to fight the NSW Government's wave of cuts to public service jobs and conditions.

The PPSA also attracted membership support with their plans to significantly reduce the enormous salaries of the paid elected officials and implement a raft of transparency and accountability measures to prevent the careerism and complacency that became a hallmark of the former leadership team during their time in power.

The prospect of increased industrial militancy from a strong, fighting public servants' union in NSW should help to strengthen the resolve of other public sector unions such as the NSW Teachers' Federation and the NSW Fire Brigade Employees Union. The PSA now plans to work closely with these unions to organise a united sector wide response to O'Farrell's anti-worker public sector attacks.

These developments will place additional pressure on the leadership of the RTBU to take strong, membership led action to defend the public transport sector from the threat of job cuts and privatisation. Many members feel that the RTBU under Claassens' leadership has been far too quiet in regard to the O'Farrell Government's attacks on workers' rights and threats to the public transport system.

The PPSA victory will provide a boost to the RTBU's rank and file group, Members Voice, as an example of what can be achieved when a team of committed members works persistently over many years to build up support until victory is possible.

At the last RTBU election in February 2011 Members Voice ran on a platform of developing a strong membership led industrial campaign to protect jobs and conditions, to cut the huge (and still undeclared) salaries of the paid elected officials, implement transparency and accountability measures in the affairs of the RTBU and firmly place control of the union in the hands of rank and file members.

At that election Members Voice supported a ticket of 19 candidates who challenged the current leadership team and assisted nine of them to be elected to the NSW RTBU Branch Council.

*For more information about Members Voice contact: [membersvoice2010@yahoo.com](mailto:membersvoice2010@yahoo.com)*

## N.Z. BUS NEWS

### **Auckland bus drivers' spirit prevails over dead hand of union bureaucrats**

*October 14, 2012*

At a mass meeting Auckland bus drivers working for NZ Bus Ltd had thrown out a pay deal recommended to them by the First Union and the Tram-

ways Union, and the drivers were set to strike on Monday, September 24, and every Monday thereafter. Every socialist and trade unionist should be aware of what happened next and of the full story of the drivers' dispute so far.

It shows precisely what is wrong with the union movement at the moment and where hope lies.

At the last minute, without consulting the membership, union officials called the strikes off and tried to foist the same basic deal on the bus drivers they had already rejected three weeks ago. The deal was put to a second vote, a secret ballot this time, which closed on Friday, October 5. The result was another rejection, confounding the unholy alliance of bus company and union officials.

It is not yet known what action the two unions will take now. But the story of this dispute is still unfolding.

The story begins with 900 bus workers seeking a new collective agreement with NZ Bus Ltd to run from July 2012. The bus drivers are currently paid \$18.75 an hour; and they only get paid for 8 hours of a 14-hour day when on a split shift; they get time and a quarter for working on a rostered day off. The drivers want a substantial pay increase, and no wonder.

NZ Bus is owned by the multi-national giant Infratil. Infratil can afford to pay up. Its profits rose by 6% to \$127 million in the year to April and the company increased its dividend payout by 18%. This company feeds off what were once publicly owned services and utilities.

On August 23, the drivers began industrial action with a work-to-rule. On September 4, the Auckland Tramways Union and First Union announced the drivers would step up their ac-

tion by striking every Monday for nine weeks, starting on September 17. Tramways Union president Gary Froggatt said the dispute was over the drivers' claim for the company to start paying \$20 an hour sooner. During bargaining, the unions asked that the \$20 rate should start from July 2013, but NZ Bus would only agree to pay \$20 an hour from April 2014 (the mandate given by the drivers to their officials was not limited to \$20 an hour but was for an unspecified increase to a living wage.)

An Auckland bus strike would give huge power to the drivers' bargaining position. It would cause considerable disruption. Alternative arrangements would have to be made for children to get to school. People would be late for work. It was time to call in Helen Kelly, of the Council of Trade Unions, to save capitalism from this awful prospect!

On September 12, before the first Monday strike was due, NZ Bus and Helen Kelly put out a joint press release to announce a proposed settlement that would be recommended by the unions to a ratification meeting of drivers on September 17.

A press release put out later by NZ Bus is enlightening. It says that after the deal was reached "The union executive even shouted the company a beer after signing the terms of settlement to celebrate reaching agreement."

For union officials to be celebrating with the employers in advance of the ratification meeting is scandalous. It shows complete contempt for rank-and-file members.

The ratification meeting on Monday, September 17, rejected the joint union recommendation and voted to implement the Monday strikes. The deal was voted down 352 to 265 according to NZ Bus, admittedly an unreliable source. The deal included an increase in the rate for working on rostered days off to time and a-half (again according to NZ Bus, therefore a health warning on this information applies). The reason the drivers rejected the proposal was the delay to the \$20-an-hour rate until December 2013.

The vote by the rank and file was a slap in the face to the union officials and the CTU. 3 News reported the NZ Bus CEO saying "The president of the Council of Trade Unions had done a great job, and also spoke at that meeting in support of our offer, so ... I'm at a loss."

This episode demonstrates just how far paid union officials can be out of touch with the ordinary union member. Of course, none of these union worthies would be struggling on \$18.75 an hour themselves. Union leaders worth their salt would not recommend a lousy deal, but would be fully behind action for a living wage.

What followed the rank-and-file rebellion was nothing but a conspiracy by the union bureaucrats and bus company to clamp down on the drivers' independent spirit. With the first Monday strike looming for September 24 the union officials did another deal with NZ Bus, called off the strike and put out a joint press release with the company. The excuse for calling the action off was an improvement in the pay offer so paltry as to be almost insignificant. Instead of \$20 an hour from December 2013, the rate would commence from November 2013.

The worst of it though seems to have been that the officials agreed to change the ratification process at the employers' behest. Ominously, the press release quoted the bus company spokesman saying "We are delighted that agreement has been reached and changes to the ratification process agreed."

*See Page 28*

## 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.

Unlike with the previous proposal, there wasn't a mass meeting to discuss the barely revised deal.

*Continued From Page 27*

Instead a secret ballot was organised depot by depot. This change in the ratification process meant, of course, that there would not be a forum for any alternative viewpoint being voiced by ordinary members to the membership as a whole, and that the unity and confidence generated by a mass meeting would not occur. The arrangements were designed for voting in isolation in order to get the new version of the agreement through.

According to First Union the ballot result was 51% to 49% to reject on a high turnout.

It shows the drivers' determination that despite the demoralising antics of the union officials, the second deal was thrown out. We have to wait and see whether the unions will re-instate the Monday strikes threat. There can be no doubt a great majority of drivers would abide by a strike call even though nearly half voted for the settlement. *Martin Gregory. Edited Thanks to ISO*