

No.156

Nov. - Dec. 2016

# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**TIME TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS WITH CASHED  
UP BAIRD GOVT. WITH GRASS ROOTS  
DIRECT ACTION CAMPAIGN FOR EBA 2017!**



NSW RAILWAY NEWS;  
EBA 2017 LOG OF CLAIMS;  
INTERNATIONAL NEWS;  
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE;

STA BUSIE NEWS;  
VIC. RAIL NEWS;  
LIGHT RAIL UPDATE;  
OBITUARY;

## **EDITORIAL**

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important news in NSW in recent weeks, was the sale of Ausgrid by the Baird Govt. for a net \$13 Billion. It's vital to seize the opportunity to get some goodies from the now cashed up Baird Govt. and fix up many of the problems which exist on the job. Consequently we are initiating a "grass roots" log of claims for the upcoming railway EBA 2017. We have made some suggestions to get the ball rolling and are seeking your ideas. (See article page 3.) We are encouraging grass roots on the job organisation to play a key role in the campaign for the claim based on direct action. In this context, it's important to have an eye for the formation of a new union based on grass roots control principles (See back of Sparks) initially to unite all grades in the railways, and eventually spreading to unite the grass roots in all transport sectors. There has been much talk around the traps about just leaving the union "en masse" due to the big attacks the union officials have been complicit. What would be much more effective is creating a new organisation which can turn the tide.

In the STA the savage speed up, associated driver shortages, mad corner cutting and the bosses constant seizing on trifles to impose fines and cut wages is ever worsening the job. Whilst the money saved from corner cutting can fund the Baird Govt's various "white elephant" projects. (See article page 12) In the media, Baird's talk about unrealistic "on-demand" buses and ditching of timetables, and more threats of privatisation, points to more vicious attacks in EBA 2017. Consequently as in the railways a grass roots log of claims for the EBA and associated campaign of direct action is vital with an eye to a new union.

In recent months there were "mysterious" NSW Police raids on certain STA depots. Could there be a Baird Govt. "hidden agenda" behind all this? (See article page 16.) We know what you have been doing thanks to CEO Rowley's austere regime and the rigours of the job, but what have we been up to? Our spies have been busy and with the latest surveillance equipment your taxes can buy care of our moles in ASIO have gathered some juicy information about the senior STA bosses. (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 New Agreement is a Chance to Right the Wrongs**

**(But only if we do it together)**

*By Crimson Coconut*

Another bargaining period is upon us in the lead up to the 2017 Enterprise Agreement. The last Agreement saw the old Rail Agreements split up into their component parts. You now have separate agreements for Sydney Trains, NSW Trains, Transport NSW, etc. This in our opinion is not a good thing for workers, as the collective strength of the membership is divided. Management wanted it this way for no other reason except than that it favours them. All the talk about different business divisions requiring different agreements is nonsense. It will now be possible for people doing basically the same task to be on a different award and having different conditions and wage rates.

**With that in mind we need to look ahead to the next agreement. What is it we want out of a new agreement?**

In the past there have been union surveys and delegate discussions on a new log of claims before bargaining has been introduced. However the final log of claims has never matched the aspirations of the general membership of the unions involved. The final log of claims put forward has always reflected the political aspirations of the Union's bureaucrats.

Who can remember a past ridiculous claim for the sale of Martin's Creek Quarry as a condition on a log claims for an E.B.A.? We all know who was the beneficiary of that process in N.S.W. The A.L.P.?

The Log of Claims is always rubber stamped by handpicked delegates at a special meeting. There is little or no input from the general membership. So in reality any Log of Claims in the past had little or no relevance to those at the shop floor.

The outcome of presenting the log of claims to Management and getting up a few favourable concessions for the workforce has largely always been a failure. Management have hammered home their advantage on what has substantially been their austerity agenda and down-sizing for privatisation. The Unions have had to play the defensive game of not giving too much away.

**Why have we been on the back foot in recent years rather than taking the initiative in bargaining?**

One of the most important failings lies in the lead-up to a bargaining round. It comes down to the real lack of workplace democracy. Although staff "briefings" are held during negotiations they are always stage managed affairs with management often sitting in with union delegates to put down any dissent. The ideas and questions of the general membership is not taken seriously at these meetings. It is a process whereby their bureaucracy's obligations are fulfilled, yet it involves no real consultation with the membership.

From the Union and Membership point of view the whole process must start much sooner than this. Unions and their Members must have regular meetings to thrash out the important issues well before negotiations begin. Heaven forbid, many of our fellow workers do not know or care how or why the bargaining process takes place. This is not their fault. They must be brought into the bargaining process and become owners of it. That's possibly the best way

to share knowledge and experience across the broad spectrum of the general membership. Loyalty and solidarity would be the main by-product of a more representative and diverse process.

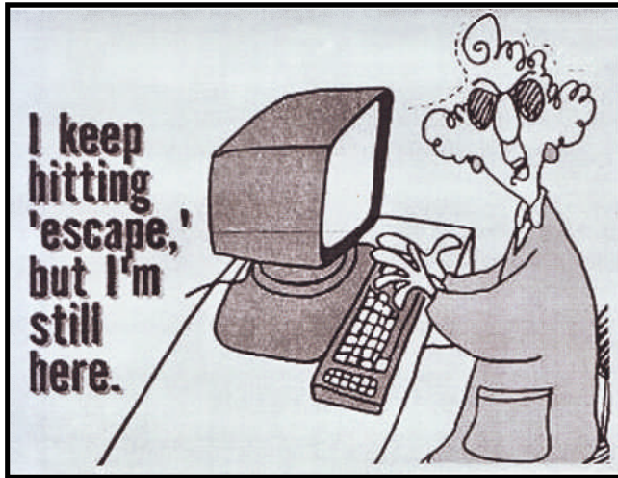
Why not, for instance, start Bargaining Committees in every workplace run by local union members, (not handpicked stooges)? These then could feed into a central bargaining policy committee. Made up of elected representatives from each workplace it would help pull policy and bargaining together. The local elected representatives would be only answerable to the people in their immediate workplace or to those that elected them, but would be able to represent their local committee views to the Central Bargaining Committee. This could then form a two way street with a report back to the Local Bargaining Committee on the outcomes from the Central Committee at regular intervals.

Something must change, as the current process of bringing in outsiders from Unions NSW, who have a poor understanding of what is happening in particular workplaces or bringing their own political agenda is not working. It is also very undemocratic.

Politically it is far more expedient for the Unions to just say "You elected us - we'll do the bargaining for you".

That approach is not good enough and leads to poor outcomes since it does not allow the combined strength of the membership to be utilised in a dispute. Maybe that's the way some people on both sides want it? Members must be the ones who decide what goes into the Log of Claims. The Union and Union Leadership should be the conduit through which the wishes of the membership is articulated and acted upon.

For our Agreement we need to think hard and long about what is important to us collectively as a workforce. We also need to think hard about how we ensure that any Log of Claims that we put forward is seriously considered and implemented. We should never contemplate Management removing the totality of our claims from the table as they have in the past. We also need strategies for mounting a defence of these claims if they look like being discarded. As



I've discussed above, only a general mobilisation and democratic organisation can help with that. Without it we are back on the defensive from the boss's agenda of cuts and privatisation.

**We at Sparks would like YOU to put forward some of the issues that YOU think are important enough to be included in E.B.A. 2017. You can send your suggestions to:**

EMAIL: rebworknet@y7mail.com

or alternatively drop us a note to:

Sparks

P.O. Box 92

Broadway 2007 NSW

If we get enough suggestions we can compare it with the final Log of Claims put forward by the Combined Unions.

**To get you thinking here are a few suggestions that we would like to see in the next E.B.A.**

The most pressing issue that we have to deal with today is that of job security. How we shore up our jobs in an era of privatisation, austerity, downsizing, automation, part time and casual work and other forms of insecure work is not an easy task. Short of full revolutionary change and redistribution of wealth, that we advocate, it is well beyond the scope of anything that can be put in an Enterprise Agreement.

**So here we go with a few suggestions:**

- \* Agreed limits on the use of part-time and casual work.
- \* Automatic conversion of part-time and casual workers into full time workers after 6 months.
- \* Paid leave for sufferers of Domestic Violence.
- \* Full consultation with the affected workforce (not just the union) before any workplace changes brought about by new technology or economic requirements.
- \* A pay rise above the imposed Government cap. (See latest ABC Staff Agreement for what can be achieved).
- \* Savings through technological change and workplace change to be passed on in the form of wage increases and generous redundancy payouts.
- \* Delays to the implementation of new procedures, processes and technological changes if they don't work or if management has not implemented them properly. (i.e. computerised pay and sign-on).
- \* Real progression through the ranks based on ability, time served and dedication rather than cronyism and who you play golf with.
- \* Employer contributed insurance cover for journey claims to and from work at ridiculous hours.
- \* Examine the logistics of setting up regional (i.e. City Circle, Parramatta, Bankstown, Sutherland, etc.) publicly run workplace child care or minding facilities in order to full fill a promise of a 50% female workforce.

\* Although privatisation should be resisted by the Unions, helping halt the spread of privatisation is also beyond the scope of an E.B.A. We can call, however, for parity of wages and conditions for any employees transferred to the private sector at the substantial rate of

pay. Where the union has coverage of employees in the newly transferred private business it is hoped that conditions

and wages would be on par with those in the public sector and vice-versa

Get active on your EBA now. Demand a say in drawing up a Log of Claims. Follow it through to the best of your ability to see it implemented. There's no doubt that management are already putting the finishing touches to their E.B.A. proposals. They always have a march on us since that is their full time job. Together we can do better. Unlike them, we have a whole world to win.

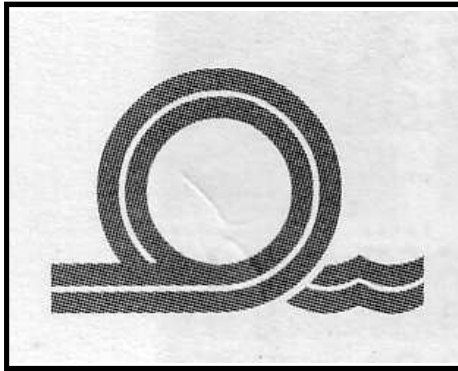
## **Rest in Peace Manmeet Alisher**

Sparks and Members Voice joins with the Unions, Union Members and the community in sending condolences to the family, friends and the Indian Community over the senseless death of Manmeet.

Manmeet Alisher was set alight by a deranged passenger and burned to death while driving a bus. An exemplary member of a vibrant community he led a valued life that was cut too short. His short life should be an inspiration to others. May he Rest in Peace.







## MISSION IMPOSSIBLE!

### Conference at Australian Federal Police HQ

It had been a busy day on the 16th August 2016 at Australian Federal Police (AFP) Head Quarters in Sydney. There had been held an all day meeting in the conference room. Those attending included officers from the AFP Serious Fraud Squad, ASIO spooks and even Top Army Brass from the SAS(Special Air Service). One of our Sparks moles in ASIO even made it along. There was an intense hum of discussion in the room associated with the circulation of a dossier of top secret documents. It included ATO (Australian Taxation Office) transcripts from the “Panama Papers”, credit card statements, Austrac papers showing national and international money transfers, amongst other documents.

**Surprisingly an ASIO spook opened the proceedings. After welcoming the attendees, he explained the purpose of the meeting and the nature of the project to be embarked upon. He outlined how the Turnbull and Baird Govts. were very worried that a massive scandal was about to erupt and endanger their re-election fortunes.** The potential scandal involved massive rorts involving a certain Peter Rowley STA CEO and other STA executives. ASIO surveillance had revealed award winning investigative journalists were now “nosing around” on the looming scandal.

It involved the syphoning of multi millions from STA finances and its transfer to overseas front companies in such tax havens as the Cayman Islands and the squirreling away of millions from the STA budget in Swiss bank accounts. Senior ASIO officers who have seen a lot over the years and done plenty of dirty work for the Govt. such as the Hilton Bombing of the 1970's and the rigging of union elections in association with the AEC(Australian Electoral Commission), were appalled by the millions squandered on “Escort Services”. Involving a range of choice and expensive establishments such as “Touch of Class” and “Salon Kitty” of Surry Hills and the “Gateway Club” of Petersham as revealed on official STA credit card statements. Dwarfing the expenditure of the notorious Craig Thomson of the “trade union movement” on the Melbourne, mouth watering “Young Blondes”. They couldn't believe

Rowley and his merry men given their years were capable of such extensive and costly frolicking and had such enormous carnal appetites! They whinged piteously that this money could have been spent on the ASIO budget to assist an urgently required “Police State” to protect the nation from ISIS.

The ASIO spook cut to the chase, and levelled with the gathering. Higher ups have ordered us to scupper this brewing scandal. We have to organise a “Black Op”. Just like we did with the Lindt Cafe Siege. We’ll “take care” of the Rowley gang, as “dead men tell no tales”, just like we did with that “Man Monis” guy. With the aid of the Govt’s corporate media mates we’ll turn it into a fake ISIS terrorist incident. We’ll create a scenario involving “Jihadi Peter” and his “Pack of Lone Wolves”. As a result we can boost the budgets of ASIO, the Federal Police and the Military and find a “final solution” to the Govt’s ticklish problem. What could be more delightful!

### Conference at STA HQ in Leichhardt

Early in Sept. 2016, ASIO officers investigating Rowley’s massive rorts broke into the STA HQ and installed a “Bug” in the conference room. Our Sparks mole in ASIO who coincidentally was involved in the operation with some clever trade craft also installed a “Bug” for Sparks there. Again we were one step ahead!

**On the morning of 9th Sept. 2016, the conference room at STA HQ was chock a block with Depot Admin. Officers, Depot Managers, Rowley’s Exec’s and the man himself. Rowley opened the conference with a big rant about the need to raise performance by an initial 10% and if managers were seen as not achieving this goal, they would be out on their ear.** Whilst handsome bonuses were on offer for those who achieved it. Subsequently there would be further performance increases of 12%, 15% and so on. Rowley emphasised that STA management has to be forward looking and not resting on its laurels. Drivers might get the impression they are being “terrorised” with this relentless tightening of screws, cut-backs and speedups.

However, Rowley emphasised the union executive is in our pocket, so we have nothing to fear in regard to industrial resistance! He then cracked a little joke in poor taste that STA management is certainly not “inspired” by ISIS, but dollar signs! He declared in the manner of a very unctuous priest that STA management holds allegiance to the Australian Flag considering it sacred and would





never transfer allegiance to the Flag of the Death Cult! Reassuring those members of his audience, who may have become uncertain! Rowley an avid Telegraph reader, savoured its hysterical “terrorism” beat up stories. Anxiously awaiting each edition, and exulting at the tales of daring do by ASIO and the police in tracking down and cornering ISIS “lone wolves!”

During the rave, as usual at such conferences according to snaps in “We’re Moving Sydney” Magazine, Maestro Rowley performed bizarre antics he had learnt at a “Charismatic Management” course for CEO’s. Frantically waving in one hand a dark “monetary flag” embroidered lovingly by his dearest wife with dollar signs and in the other like some Christian fundamentalist clutching his bible, a fat tome “Rowley’s Handy Hints for Corner Cutting”. Apparently to inspire “the troops”. At the end of the diatribe he asked dramatically “Do you accept this mission to raise performance by an initial 10% and then further increases?” The entire audience responded in unison “Yes! With relish! This mission is not impossible!”

### **Australian Federal Police raid on STA HQ!!!**

**Just as the conference was reaching fever pitch, loud piecing sirens were heard! AFP cars racing to STA HQ screeched to a halt outside. An AFP “Swat Team” all in black jumped out armed to the teeth.** As they were storming the HQ, armed security guards, who confused them with an Islamic State suicide squad courtesy of the Telegraph’s over enthusiastic “public enlightenment” on this subject, opened fire forcing the cops to duck. Soon the HQ was surrounded and a Lindt Cafe style “Siege” commenced. An AFP loud speaker shrilly announced “Jihadi Peter Rowley and your pack of executive “lone ISIS wolves”, surrender! Come out with your hands up and you don’t have a worry in the world!” SAS snipers were now in place with the latest in laser guided rifles and cross fire prepared to send Rowley and his pack to kingdom come when they are peeked leaving the HQ!

At the Murdoch News Limited “Telegraph” offices, an outrageous front page and following spread was ready for print. Enormous headlines blared “Jihadi Peter planning to help Death Cult” and in a sub heading “Peter Rowley STA CEO “inspired” by ISIS!” Rowley was depicted in a very contrived picture with a “burnoose” and waving a very tacky touched up Islamic State Flag in one hand and in the other an obviously touched up copy of the Koran! Yelling allegedly “Allah Akbah!” at a management conference, rather than the more alarming “increase performance by 10%!” His exec’s were depicted also in flowing burnooses waving Scimitars and other murderous looking sharp swords, not to “shave” STA



budgets or “prune” the older drivers for the sack, but slay enemies of the ISIS Caliphate and sever Christian Heads!

A wildly, scurrilous story presented “Jihadi Peter” recruiting STA bus operators to run buses on routes in ISIS controlled parts of Syria, selected operators for the occasional “joy ride” on TNT packed buses at 100 Kilometres Per Hour to Syrian Army targets, more “thrilling” than driving the current STA fleet buses which can suddenly “spontaneously combust” and bus operators to become Islamic warriors in the Syrian killing fields. With the promise of the company of delectable young virgins in Paradise in the case of martyrdom. Perhaps less dangerous than the killing fields of Sydney roads! However, luckily “Jihadi Peter” and his lone wolves were all “tidily” mown down “attempting to escape” a siege at the STA HQ by heroic AFP officers.

Lacking any response from Rowley, the AFP stormed the HQ in a blaze of gunfire and a cloud of tear gas causing carnage and burst into the conference room. All the Depot Managers and Admin. Officers were choking and lined up against the wall with AFP guns trained at their heads. An AFP senior officer yelled menacingly “Show us where “Jihadi Peter” and his “Lone Wolves” are, or you’ll be “accidentally” mown down as Jihadies “attempting to escape!” Fearing for their lives, they directed the AFP to a mysterious tunnel which Rowley and his execs were last seen entering and was later discovered led to the “Gateway Club” in nearby Petersham. Losing their prey, the AFP had to call the Telegraph to halt its Front Page and Spread story.

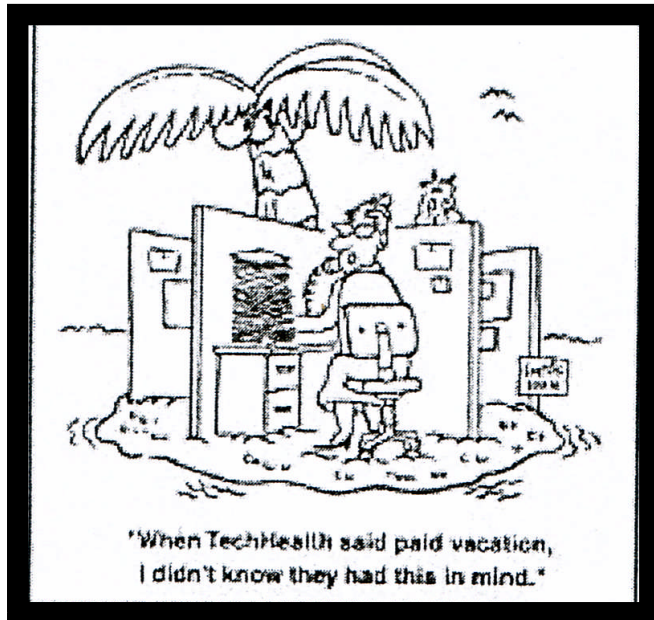
## STA BUSIE NEWS

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

**Sparks: What are your thoughts on the hidden agenda behind the Light Rail Extensions?**

Waverley Busie: Why are the Light Rail extensions in the Eastern Suburbs being constructed? The reason is to provide a tool for the Baird Govt’s developer and builder mates to make short term windfall profits and for the Baird Govt. to increase revenue via stamp duty on property sales. To get from point A to B, the Light Rail is a white elephant. The existing bus services in the Eastern Suburbs are quite sufficient. Latest news is that the first light rail vehicles will run on the new extensions from 2019. Whilst a recent Channel 9 report has confirmed the information in the last Sparks, that the Light Rail will carry much less passengers than the existing bus services in the Eastern Suburbs. The existing buses will also be much quieter than the Light Rail vehicles. It’s not true that the Light Rail will cause less cars in the city. People will still be using the same amount. However, there will be several hundred less bus drivers. The extensions will have a domino effect in terms of opening up the area to massive high rise developments and the selloff of public housing in such suburbs as Daceyville.

Already at East Gardens where the Light Rail vehicle yard is to be located, Meritons are constructing 10 to 15 storey apartment blocks. According to a friend of mine who some months ago bought a smallish place in Kingsford for \$1 million which is close to the extensions, the property has now increased in value by \$100,000. So with the extensions, real estate owners and developers in the Kingsford and Kensington areas are getting a windfall. It also seems that the Baird Govt. has given a lucrative deal to the builders, as they can take as long as they want to complete the project. Is this the Sydney that we would want?



**Sparks: What are your impressions of the Baird Govt.'s projects?**

WB: A nasty "secretive" underside is becoming apparent with the WESTCONNEX project. It has been reported that soil filler containing asbestos has been sold to the WESTCONNEX builders to be used in the construction. Recently the Transport Company Moir, has been caught dumping asbestos contaminated soil in various locations. It just goes to show how in Baird's NSW bending the rules by big business such as illegal dumping is out of control. With the Govt's reliance on South Korea and China to manufacture equipment for the projects, there are serious issues of corruption associated with the companies involved in the manufacturing in these countries. Overall billions are being squandered on these projects, some of which are completely unnecessary such as the Light Rail extensions, WESTCONNEX and tunnels. However, public services and associated infrastructure which are in urgent need of expenditure are being neglected. Recently I was speaking to someone from North-West country NSW, who mentioned that the hospital in a major medium sized city in this area has been completely neglected in regard to funding from the Govt., which has severely affected its operations. Despite promises from the Baird Govt. of expenditure. With this rampage of the Baird Govt. there seems a lot of "selective hearing" on both Liberal and ALP sides of politics. Too many crooks are being allowed to do what they want.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the "disconnectedness" problem in the railways and the buses?**

WB: I've noticed a lot of new staff appearing at stations. They seem to be quite timid and don't know how to handle groups of commuters. There also seems a big decline in the number

of old timers. On the buses as part of “Optimisation” there seems a similar problem developing. I’ve noticed at the Bronte Beach terminus drivers from other depots who are doing the run, are staying locked up in their buses and are unwilling to communicate with other drivers. It seems they are on another planet. At the Bondi Junction Interchange, where under Optimisation there is now drivers from a range of different depots such as the Nth Shore, Tempe, Kingsgrove, Leichhardt, Waverley, Randwick and Port Botany. It seems many feel alienated and don’t see the interchange as part of their heartland and just want to remain in their buses and not socialise with other drivers.

**Sparks: What’s the latest with the high turnover of drivers on the job and injuries on the job?**

WB: We are continuing to see the situation where the STA never gets enough drivers for the job. Outside Waverley Depot there is a large banner advertising vacancies for fulltime, part time and casual drivers. The high turnover seems associated with a range of factors such as the job becoming too difficult and stressful, low morale, the wages of up to \$85,000 pa with penalties, O/T etc at Waverley which is the best paid depot in the STA and at other depots wages of between \$65,000 to \$75,000 pa, being inadequate. I was recently speaking to someone from TransDev. He seemed much less stressed by his job. The numbers of new drivers coming on to the job and remaining on it, is not meeting the number of drivers leaving due to them going overseas, retiring and other reasons. I can’t put my finger on the main cause.

I was recently speaking to someone from Hanson Concrete Mixers. He mentioned that his company has the same problem with a severe shortage of trained concrete mixer drivers.

In the case of workplace injuries, I have noticed many drivers are developing RSI related upper shoulder injuries associated with the straining of tendons. Resulting from applying the hand brake and steering. Despite the widespread nature of the injury, most won’t speak up about the issue as it seems they don’t want to rock the boat and fear for their jobs.

**Sparks: How is management viewing the problems of drivers?**

WB: 2 months ago management sent out a second questionnaire to us about on the job problems. The bosses say they have learnt quite a bit from the response. Whilst in a recent DVD starring Peter Rowley and Jamie Sinclair even admitted that drivers in the STA are doing things tough. However they are doing nothing to remedy this situation. In fact, the bosses are worsening things for us with the constant push to impose more cutbacks and ignoring the impact of this onslaught upon us. They are milking more from us and establishing more control with constant restrictions. As part of the 6 monthly GPS “cosy little chats,” the bosses are downloading personal on-line data collected to check on various aspects of our situation. A gung ho boss could use this info to turn the screws on you. The bosses are cutting our pay by imposing fines over trifles. Some areas they target are drivers exceeding the 10 kph speed limit and not wearing the vest in the yard and running late. At Waverley, allegedly 5-7-8 drivers have been fined in recent times over this speed limit issue. At a recent union meeting we were warned that if we get fined over this issue, we can’t claim from the traffic fine fund. The bosses shouldn’t be making money out of us on this pretext. There is no need for this extra layer of “Code of Conduct.” We appear to be heading for the draconian regime which occurred during the Greiner Govt. years.

Twenty years ago the Depot was a much more family friendly place and there was a great social life. Today this has largely disappeared, with ever more restrictions imposed by management. The bosses have also savagely cut training. The latest training I can recall attending was 18 months ago concerning how to get about in Rozelle. Whilst the STA is constantly milking money out of us with various ploys and constant corner cutting, the Baird Govt. is using these funds to splurge on unnecessary projects like the Light Rail Extensions and big bonuses for the bosses.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of Randwick Depot?**

WB: Despite its great history, the Govt. intends to sweep it away. These days it has a very lost and forlorn look. I've noticed that the canteen has been closed, and there is no cafe type area for drivers to socialise, encouraging a disconnection amongst them. Whilst various items of equipment are unavailable. By 2019 the depot will be gone and the area will disappear in high rise overdevelopment.

**Sparks: How is the situation with bus maintenance?**

WB: I was recently speaking to a bus dispatcher at the depot. He was very upset about the number of buses breaking down on the road. He considered a major contribution to the problem has been the outsourcing by the bosses of different sectors of bus maintenance such as tyres and electronics to different contractors to save money. Whilst, as in the case of drivers there is a disconnectedness amongst mechanical staff contributing to oversights in work



*"I'm actually the CEO of a major corporation...  
but they tied my pay to performance."*

done. Other contributing factors are the metal fatigue and other problems caused by the buses being on the road for between 12 to 18 hours per day in the inner west. When we first get to our bus at the start of our shift, we have to check for any obvious problems. However, this is insufficient, a comprehensive inspection needs to be conducted on each bus by the mechanics to detect and remedy problems. Such inspections are not occurring. There needs to be 3 extra mechanics employed at each depot. It seems the bosses are just spending the bare minimum to keep the buses moving.

**Sparks: How are you finding the Opals?**

WB: The bosses say the Opal system is not our problem. They are lying to us. It is our problem. I have noticed some continuing niggly problems such as “sticky” buttons on the console and the GPS not turning off. Whilst, the Opal software is getting older and likely to be prone to more malfunctioning in the future. As a result of these problems, we are undergoing more fatigue. We need relaxed drivers. Cubic which supplies the Opal system needs to be advised of these problems and have techs conduct regular services of all buses. With the lack of ticket issuing, associated with the Opal system, the bosses are now seizing the opportunity to further cut our running times between 5 and 10 minutes. Commuters are being hard done by with the loss of free Opal trips. Public transport is becoming ever more expensive and more bus stops are being cut out.

**Sparks: How is the situation with the uniforms?**

WB: We still haven't received the new uniform. Latest news is that it's been promised to be issued early next year. With this delay, it seems the bosses are trying another ploy to save money. On offer are two types of uniform: a nylon hot and crappy one favoured by the bosses and a cotton uniform, which most drivers want. The on-line distribution of the last uniform was fraught with problems. Only 10 to 15% of drivers were confident with it, whilst the rest struggle. It has led many drivers to miss parts and get the wrong size. There needs to be people to people contact in the uniform distribution to avoid these problems. The Uniform supplier should be made to take the responsibility to come out to the depots with the uniforms of different sizes so it can be properly distributed.

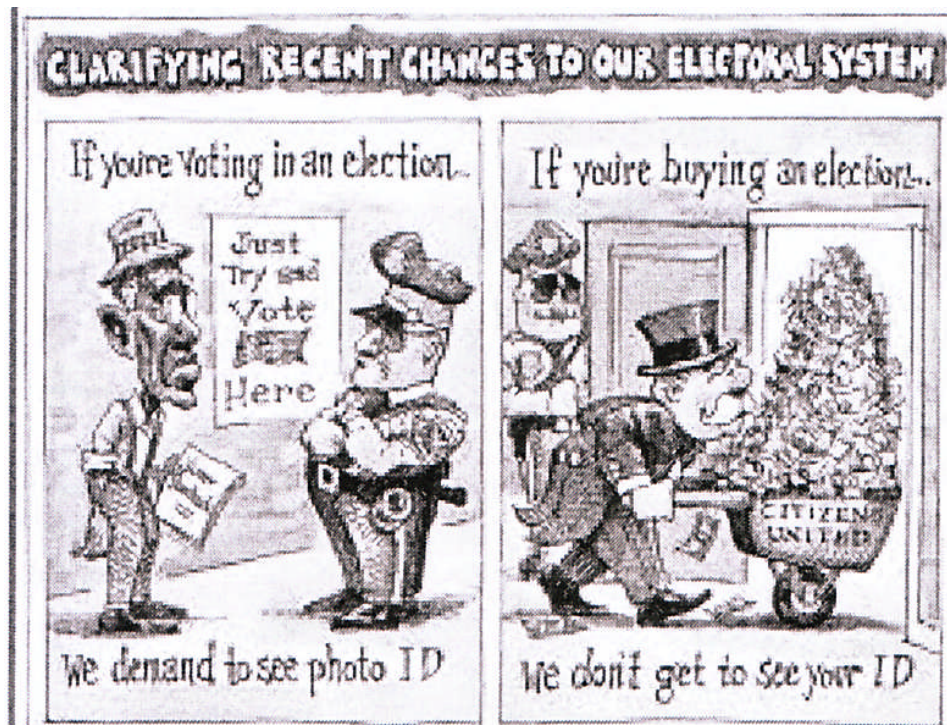
## **BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: What has been the response at Burwood to the new shift changes advised as of Wed. 19/10/16?**

Burwood Driver: I have noticed a generally favourable impression amongst those drivers I have spoken about it. In regard to the normal shifts, new lines of work have been added to both the AM and PM shifts. The extra work for the PM shifts is connected to the M41 running until after 1am from Burwood to MacQuarie Park due it seems to work on the Nth Western Rail line. Whilst those displaced from rosters last time the shifts were changed have now got back on. Generally, it's been quiet, seems neither the STA or the union officials want to make waves at the moment.

**Sparks: What is the situation with buses bursting into flames?**





BD: At our depot all buses have had fire suppressors installed. So far we have not received any more information on the subject from either management or the union hierarchy. Despite the importance of the issue, there has only been small articles in the papers.

**Sparks: How are you finding the new manager?**

BD: We are getting on very well with him. He seems to make snap decisions which favour drivers such as in regard to leave. In the case of part timers he has been very helpful in responding to concerns. In regard to one driver's complaint about a short shift, he has somehow intervened and extended the length. Those at the depot who have become part timers have done so because of personal and family considerations. Despite these drivers being affected by considerable pay cuts. One driver I know has been quite hard hit with short shifts, but considers next time shifts are reorganised he will come out better.

## LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the Police raid on Leichhardt on 18th August?**

Leichhardt Busie: It appears a disgruntled journalist who had an unhappy experience on an STA bus had some role in causing the caper. 48 vehicles were checked and all drivers who

were around at the depot at the time were drug tested by the cops. However, only minor problems with the buses were detected involving such issues as seats not screwed properly.

**Sparks: What is the biggest issue at the depot lately?**

LB: Our continuing major issue is the shortage of drivers. Every day at Leichhardt we are at least 11 drivers down for runs. Consequently, drivers on their day off are continually called in and many of us are becoming worn out and burnt out. Contributing to this situation is that trainees can't cope with the full on nature of the job and ferocious speed up and soon get fed up and leave the job.

**Sparks: How are you finding the new manager?**

LB: We don't see her much. She is that type of manager.

**Mechanical Section News**

The most significant news has been the police raid at the depot on 18/8/16. In regard to the raid, basically the highway patrol came through and did a snap audit in response to several incidents with STA. We had a front wheel hub bearing collapse and the wheel and hub came off in Balmain. Also, there was a Burwood bus that crashed into a house, drivers fault. So the cops came out and tried to defect buses. But we already had RMS or RTA come and inspect our buses for registration. So the highway patrol response was pointless. All of it was orchestrated by the Liberal State Govt. Cause they want to give us bad publicity and try and privatise our buses.

## **PRIVATE BUS NEWS**

**Wildcat Mass Sickie**

According to the Sydney Daily Telegraph 25/10/16, a wildcat mass sickie occurred at the Northmead depot of Hillsbus on Monday 24/10/16. It involved 83 of the 240 drivers at the depot and caused the cancellation of 185 services. Resulting in many commuters being stranded at bus stops. The TWU union bosses denied any responsibility for the action.

## **VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS**

*In this issue of Sparks, we will discuss the issues of employees on short term contracts. Drivers, Conductors and Staff from Head Office will discuss the issues. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.*

**Sparks: Why are daily paid employees employed on contract?**

Sheona: Employees are employed on six to twelve months contracts to cover for employees seconded to other positions during major projects, employees on long term illness, Maternity

Leave and if extra employees have to be recruited to cover for employees who need to be trained for a new work skill.

Clarence: An example of this occurred when the MYKI ticketing system was introduced to V/Line and platform staff were recruited. Due to retirements and resignations remaining contract employees were absorbed into V/Line.

Penelope: This was the same for

Conductors and for the last twenty years, the majority of Conductors whose work was satisfactory were appointed to permanent positions.

**Sparks: I think of the stress an employee faces toward the end of the contract. Those who want the position worry whether they will have a job.**

Dexter: The issue that Conductors think stinks is where a person on a contract applies for a permanent position. They have to apply along with other applicants. Years ago, if a vacancy occurred the Regional Manager placed the Contract Employee in the position.

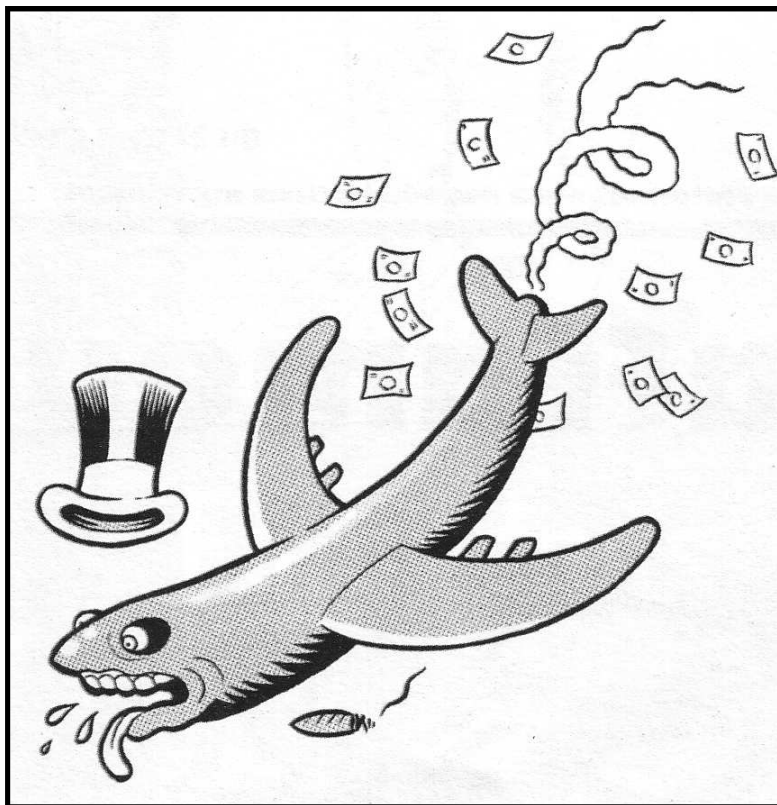
Clarence: Another issue facing Contract Employees is that a Supervisor could take a dislike to a Contract Employee making it difficult for them to obtain a permanent position.

**Sparks: I understand this happened at a country location.**

Dexter: You are correct. This happened at Miloura.

**Sparks: Could you give a background about this location.**

Sheona: This workplace is at least 240 kilometres from the next V/Line Station which is Swan Hill.



Rastus: When the passenger train ceased in 1993 V/line Freight employees sold tickets. In 1997 this was outsourced. Due to complaints from the public in 2006 V/Line took control of the agency. Thus it became a V/Line station.

Penrod: Two employees were appointed with annual leave relief covered by relieving staff from Bendigo district. It was later transferred to Ballarat district.

Penelope: The station functioned for a number of years and the local populace were pleased that V/Line was running the station, but sadly one of the employees passed away.

Sheona: This employee was replaced by an employee on a contract. Later the other employee was promoted to a position in the Bathurst area, so another employee was employed on a contract.

Dexter: The station was operating smoothly then V/Line advertised for full time positions.

Penelope: The two employees applied for the permanent positions hoping to be made permanent.

Sheona: The two employees were looking forward to obtaining an interview but it was not to happen.

**Sparks: What happened?**



Sheona: But out of the blue one of the employees received an email from the Western Line manager saying that she was to train a successor for the position. Once the person was trained she was terminated. She did not get the interview.

Roscoe: Didn't this manager have the guts to go to Miloura and explain why she was not given an interview.

Penelope: We have heard the person has had a nervous breakdown over the email.

**Sparks: What of the other employee?**

Dexter: The other employee not knowing what had happened rang up the Line Manager asking when he was to have an interview. The Line Manager informed him his work was not up to V/Line standard and he would finish up when his contract expired.

Penrod: The employee was upset with what happened, that at 1.30 pm on the same day he shut down Miloura station, went home got changed, returned to the station that night and placed his uniform on the night bus to Melbourne.

Rastus and Roscoe: One of our drivers was at Ballarat when the Miloura bus arrived and saw station staff retrieve the uniform with the resignation pinned to the uniform.

Sheona: Miloura station remained closed and the previous employee who was promoted to the Ballarat area was sent back on expenses to man the station. Later on an employee from Ballarat was sent to relieve at Miloura.

**Sparks: Think of the expenses.**

Rastus: V/Line doesn't care about expenses. If they want to terminate a person they waste large amounts of money to terminate a person.

Roscoe: We wonder if the Line Manager's mates were lined up for the positions?

**Sparks: Is this the Line Manager who told a Union Delegate at a Disciplinary Hearing that he was to observe and not defend the member he was representing?**

Roscoe: Yes.

**Sparks: Where does this individual come from?**

Rastus: He was one of these WH122 kids employed by V/line from outside so as to give V/line some expertise. All this person has achieved is to be hated by employees. Even the Local Trades and Labour Council hate the person.

Roscoe: These are the types of individuals being employed by V/Line. They have no rail experience. In fact the drivers now have supervisors with no rail experience.

**Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. People employed on contract if their work is satisfactory should be offered a permanent position without having to go for another interview.**

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say the two employees at Miloura were treated shabbily. We drivers hope the employee who had the nervous breakdown sues V/Line. As for the Line Manager, this is a message from V/Line drivers. Get out of the industry. If any employee has to front this manager for disciplinary hearings DON'T TURN UP.

# International Transport Workers News

## **USA: PHILADELPHIA URBAN TRANSIT WORKERS' STRIKE**

1/11/16

**Around 4,700 public transportation workers in Philadelphia went on strike at midnight, shutting down many of the city's transit options.**

**The members of the Transport Workers Union Local 234 and the South Eastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, or SEPTA, were unable to agree on a new contract.**

**The strike is causing widespread disruption, and raising concerns that if the situation is not resolved it may interfere with Election Day next week.**

"All Philadelphians—not just regular SEPTA riders—should prepare for significant disruptions to their commutes, especially the evening rush hour," member station WHY Y reports. "The strike shut down all of SEPTA's city transit services: Buses, trolleys, trackless trolleys and subways that operate in the city, which usually handle 884,000 trips a day, will not run."

Regional rail is the only service still operating, SEPTA says — and even before the strike, rail services were operating "at near capacity."

WHYY reporter Tom MacDonald spoke with NPR from a suburban train station in downtown Philadelphia, where he said the trains that were running were struggling with large quantities of riders — many of them unfamiliar with the trains.

"We've got delays as much as 99 minutes on some of these rail lines," MacDonald said. "Everything is behind ... the riders are frustrated. I mean, they want their regular way of going to work."

MacDonald notes that the union had been warning Philadelphia residents for weeks that a strike was in the works. But many residents are used to deadlines being extended in situations like these — a few days' delay as the union and SEPTA try to work out a deal.

"The union went on strike at exactly the strike deadline and that's caught some people off guard," MacDonald says.

It's also left students in the lurch. NBC Philadelphia, citing school officials, said around 60,000 students public, private and charter school students rely on public transit to get to school.

Schools in Philadelphia are remaining open on Tuesday, The Associated Press reports.

"[School officials] are saying that those who don't make it in will be given an excused absence, but parents are urged to find a way to bring their children to school or get them there, one way or the other," MacDonald reports.



The strike was initiated after negotiations broke down over issues including health care costs, pensions and worker rest, WHYY has reported.

SEPTA says the union walked away from “pay raises, enhanced pension benefits, maintained health care coverage levels and continued job security.”

The union says SEPTA’s representatives “refused to address non-economic issues affecting operator and public safety.”

If the strike lasts a week or more, SEPTA plans to file an emergency temporary restraining order to suspend the strike for Election Day next Tuesday, to ensure that all voters will be able to access the polls, WHYY reports.

In 2009, a SEPTA strike lasted for six days. - NPR

## **RUSSIAN TRUCKIES SET UP NEW UNION TO FIGHT PUTIN GOVT.**

**Video interview with a supporter of the truck drivers’ industrial action in Russia.**

**11mins, German with English subs., 2016**

**<http://en.labournet.tv/video/7049/strike-and-self-organisation-truckers-russia>**

June 2016, interview with a supporter of the truck drivers’ industrial action in Russia - After the introduction of the new “Platon” road toll, truck drivers who drive their own trucks feel that their livelihoods are under threat. Since November 11, 2015 they have continued with their protests. On 30 April, 2016, at a meeting of 300 delegates, the “Union of Transport Workers of Russia”(OPR) was formed.

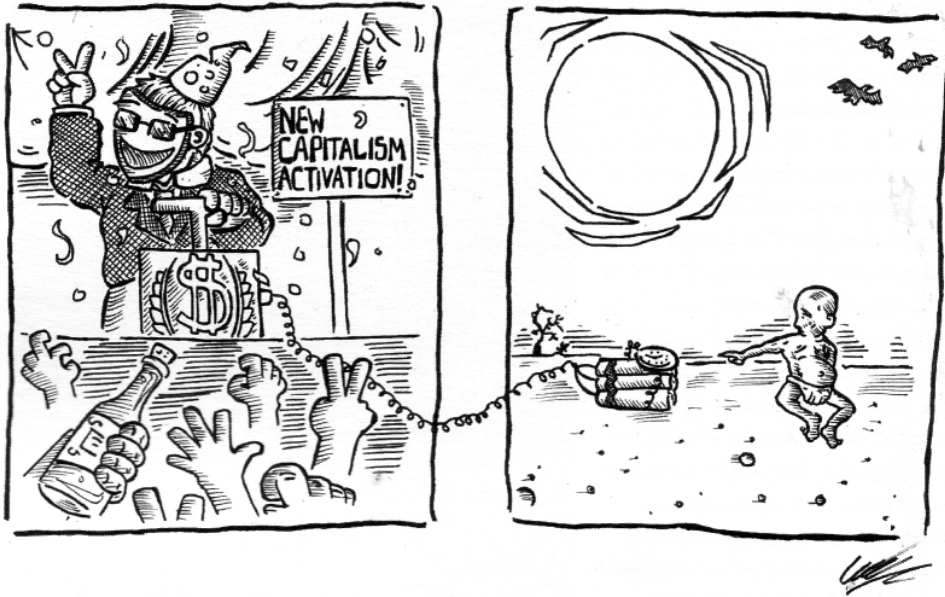
“This experience, simply sitting together in a huge room, and to realise that we were many, was really inspiring. People told me afterwards, ‘this is the happiest day of my life’.”

However, attacks on truck drivers are just one part of a generalised attack from above: “Over the past three years a lot of antisocial “reforms” have been brought in, neo liberalisation, Russian style, which is very closely linked to corruption. That is what truck drivers in Russia criticise. However this doesn’t only affect truck drivers. It affects the healthcare system, schools, which must now operate according to new economic criteria. It affects hospitals, doctors are now trying to form a ‘wild’ union, which is fraught with many problems...also teachers.” (from the video)

The truck drivers appreciate any messages of solidarity. Please write to them here: solidarity\_trucker (at) yahoo.com

## **UK: Deliveroo Drivers on Wildcat Strike**

17/8/16 We are now on the sixth day of strike action by couriers from the delivery firm Deliveroo. Triggered by new payment terms imposed by management, drivers are calling for a national boycott of the company until the new pay scheme is opt-in rather than opt-out, the



threat of dismissal is lifted from its workforce and the company implements the London living wage. So far this remarkable, non-traditional industrial action has seen non-unionised drivers organise themselves in physical meetings and on WhatsApp, a crowd funded strike fund of over £10,000 raised online and consumers and restaurants call for an end to driver exploitation .

However, to fully understand the Deliveroo strike dispute, it is important to realise that the two foundations of our present gig economy, freedom and flexibility, in practice mean exhaustion and exploitation. This is not only a dispute over pay, but a conflict over the nature of language and our vision of the economy itself; do we want an economy where “freedom” means exploitation or where it means security and liberty?

The Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain (IWGB) is raising this question as a trade union facilitating and supporting a campaign that is fundamentally worker-led. Without being members of any union Deliveroo drivers have organised effective action to bring the world’s attention to their inspirational struggle. We have realised this is the moment when the social network strikes back against the gig economy. This is why we are backing the drivers’ autonomous action to the hilt, liaising with management and providing crowdfunded cover for the many strikers who have signed up to the IWGB over the past few days.

**Deliveroo’s deal offers drivers neither security nor liberty; it will make life harder for them and their families.**

For Deliveroo chief executive and co-founder William Shu, “freedom” clearly means exploitation. Responding to the strike on BBC Radio 4 on Monday, he claimed to offer couriers a wage guarantee of £7.50 “during peak hours” for “a limited time” and a “choice” to opt out of

his new piece rate pay scheme. While this was trumpeted as a concession to our demands, it has been widely misrepresented. Shu's deal offers drivers neither security nor liberty; it will make life harder for them and their families.

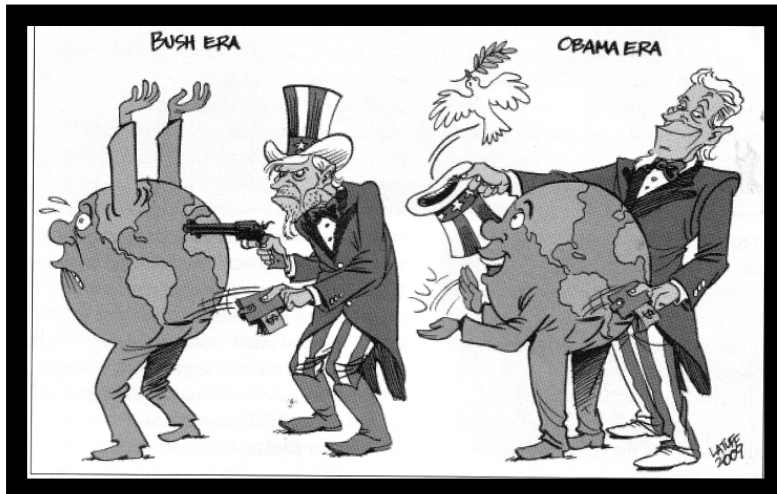
Many reporters have failed to note that Deliveroo lets workers opt out of a scheme that leaves them with no guaranteed income only if they work in a delivery zone where this scheme is not already in place, even if this means moving from south-west London's Kingston to Hackney, on the other side of the city. This forces drivers to leave neighbourhoods where their local knowledge helps them make fast deliveries for unfamiliar parts of town. Deliveroo has also made clear in emails to workers, as seen by Channel 4 News, that while workers are not "obliged" to sign the new agreement, it is a "compulsory requirement" for all riders in the area who wish to continue working for the company. Some "choice". Some "flexibility".

Note that when Shu speaks of couriers making an average of £9.20 to £9.30 per hour (a figure disputed by many drivers), this does not consider that drivers are paying out hundreds of pounds for bike repairs, scooter insurance and tax accounting. Shu states Deliveroo is a partner of two road safety charities, but he does not mention that when drivers are injured on the job they do not receive a penny in sick pay. Nor does he mention that Deliveroo does not contribute to pension payments. This is the "freedom" drivers are given.

This dispute highlights the danger that arises when the buzzwords of zero-hours Britain become detached from workers' everyday reality. What would offer couriers genuine freedom is a guaranteed London living wage of £9.40 per hour with an extra £1 per delivery and a commitment by Deliveroo to cover the costs of insurance and repairs. Many other courier firms have done this after negotiations with the IWGB, so why not Deliveroo? This is what the striking drivers are asking for. It is a modest demand, to give them the freedom to provide for themselves and their families, and the flexibility to take a day off work when they feel ill. This is the modern economy we want to see.

- This article was amended on 17 August 2016 to remove an incorrect reference to whistleblowers.

*Thanks to the Guardian*



## 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/MembersVoice Email:  
membersvoice2010@yahoo.com**

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571323?fref=ts**









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