

No.135

April - May 2010

Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**Rail Bosses & Union Hierarchy Connive to
Sell New Job Demolition Enterprise
Agreement - Grass Roots Activists
Organise to Fight Back!**



STA Busie News

Maritime Transport News

Bus Corridor Wrestling Mania

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important news in Rail Corp is the upcoming Enterprise Agreement. For a meagre pay rise, the Rail Corp Bosses with the complicity of the union hierarchy are demanding major cuts to conditions, amongst other nasties. Most significant and ominous is a major cutback to entitlements in the event of termination of employment through forced redundancy. This aspect of the EBA points to planned mass sackings associated with staff reviews. (See article Page 3)

Grass roots activists haven't been sleeping and recently held a meeting to establish a rank and file opposition movement to fight the EBA and other attacks. It will also be taking key steps to help establish, grass roots control of the union and the fighting industrial organisation which can turn the tide. (See article Page 5)

Some of the most explosive news in State Transit and in the RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) generally is the uncovering of the massive robbing of the Bus Drivers' Traffic Fine Fund. Ever since its formation, it has manifested various mysterious features. Drivers have never been issued with regular reports of its financial status and despite constant surpluses, premiums have never been paid to fund members. In this edition we throw important light on the robbing of the surpluses of the fund and associated union hierarchy skulduggery. (See article Page 9)

Whilst many have been hard at work meeting State Transit's ridiculous bus running times, our Sparks "James Bond" has been continuing his exploits involving spying on the STA fat cats and their cronies. In this edition, our spy even infiltrated the STA's inner sanctum - its conference room at Strawberry Hills, and caused mayhem at a secret bus corridor wrestling match. (See article Page 7)



Sparks welcomes contributions by transport workers in the shape of articles, poems and letters. Please send to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW or via our webpage www.sparksweb.org

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N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

Preparing to Get Screwed

by Crimson Coconut

The unions went into the 2010 Enterprise Agreement with some hast, castigating RailCorp for not wanting to negotiate a new deal. Although there is no doubt that we all deserve a pay rise due to the extra duties we have to perform, most people are still reeling from the last agreement. Many positions from the last agreement have yet to be settled, some staff are still suspended in a CityRail Limbo Land.

None of the savings for the last deal will ever be passed on to rail workers despite the sacrifices that were made. The unions modest wish list of 16 demands for the bargaining was gumped by RailCorps 27 demands. Demands which are an all out attack on our working conditions.

What we have to fear most from RailCorp's demands is a clause that would include forced redundancy. Unlike voluntary redundancy where a sweetener offer of so many weeks for each year of service is included, with forced redundancy no additional payments above the 2 weeks notice plus your own entitlements like long service and holiday pay has to be paid. Other proposed attacks include a reduction in paid casual sick days by one day and a capping of sick leave 6 months prior to retirement.

Other demands remain obscured as they have never been explained to us. It is not good enough just to mention a proposed "changes to clause 23 on filling of positions" without knowing what those changes ill be. The changes must be elaborated otherwise they remain vague and ambiguous.

There will be a renewed attack on Network Control staff who will be required to work an extended 76 hrs a fortnight. Train crewing will also come under attack along with CountryLink "on-board" staff, and CCTV Operators. No one will really be spared if this agreement is implemented. I'm pretty sure that staff will vote it down.

For all this we are being offered an extra .8% above the NSW government's wage freeze of 2.5% PA. The funny part about this is that we are not legally bound to abide by the State Government's wage freeze as this is Government policy only. There are no legal grounds for us to abide by the direction. The unions web sites have links to the wage freeze policy as if they have accepted it as a foregone conclusion and forms a starting point for negotiations. This is despite the fact that we are covered by a Federal Award which puts no such stipulation. The legality of incorporating such policies, which ties the hands of unions and workers alike, is questionable under the new Fair Work Australia legislation.

One other legally contentious issue is the inclusion of the sale of Martins Creek Quarry as a condition for getting the wage increase. To include such a demand of workers who have no control over a business decision of the State Government and RailCorp is not only ludicrous,

but in my mind would be industrially illegal. According to the Maitland Mercury newspaper says the quarry was put up for sale in 2009 and the staff involved have been offered redundancy and redeployment anyway. The unions should have struck-out this demand from day one.

So how would we, as a democratic Rank and File union, have gone into this negotiation differently:

- On the job discussion about a log of claims in convened meetings of members. Serious discussion about what could be achieved. As well as discussion about nullifying any claims put forward by management.
- Build a consensus (as much as I hate this word) around tactics that we can all agree on.
- Involve members in all decision making where possible. Only act at the instruction of members.

Ignore the NSW Governments wages policy and follow the direction of members.

During negotiation providing feedback about where the negotiations are headed and asking members what should be done next to achieve their aims.

- Refuse to trade off any jobs or conditions for a pay rise.
- Members to elect a team in which they have faith to do their negotiating.

Refuse to sit in management briefings on cost cutting exercises that effect jobs and conditions.

Ongoing campaigns on the job around job security and anti-privatisation.



Much more could have been achieved for rail workers after the debacle of the last Enterprise Agreement – sadly the lack of leadership and lack of democracy will most likely see us coping it once again. Unfortunately we are all isolated by our geographic regions and work locations, however that should not stop us. Starting now, let's stop the rot by being active on the job and resisting what management is likely to dish out by working better together.

Write to Sparks Magazine and tell us how the changes will/are affecting your workplace.

Getting the Ball Rolling

by Crimson Coconut

On Sunday March 21st a meeting was held in Sydney with the intent of forging a viable challenge to the existing powers within the RTBU. The group that attended is serious about changing the way workers see their union and interact within it. They are also serious about the role that leadership and worker participation plays in regaining lost ground that has been frivolously surrendered over the past decade.

An election fund is in the process of being set up which will be used during the election for mail-outs and providing information to union members. Various other initiatives such as an email list and web site will be set up very soon. We are expecting supporters who want change to contribute to the fund.

Our convictions come from the belief that workers within the Public Transport industry deserve much better. There are better ways of organising union affairs. All of the members of the union are a valuable resource that can be actively involved in resolving many of the issues that face them on the job day after day. Consultation and communication with and between members is the best way of defeating management when it comes time for a new agreement. Secret deals that involve just a few within the union bureaucracy, just don't work as means of putting pressure on management. It is no longer valid to say that "we elect the officials to do the work for us". This way of working hasn't served us well, as there is nothing in that method to keep them (union reps) honest or to involve members in the decision making process. We propose that the best way to keep in touch with the issues and with fellow workers is being active on the job.

The overriding principle that we all adhere to is "democracy", Union Democracy. There needs to be a free flow of ideas and action, with support when needed, to and from the ranks and the leadership of the union. We need to support each other as one unit - the old union adage of "solidarity" means just that.

We are doing this also because we can win and we can bring about a new confidence amongst transport workers knowing that their rights are important.

We are calling on other serious like minded candidates to stand on a democratic, rank and file ticket with us. That would mean agreeing to a set of principles that are for the common good of us all. Elected candidates would also be subject to

See Page 23

RAIL – BUS

City Rail News

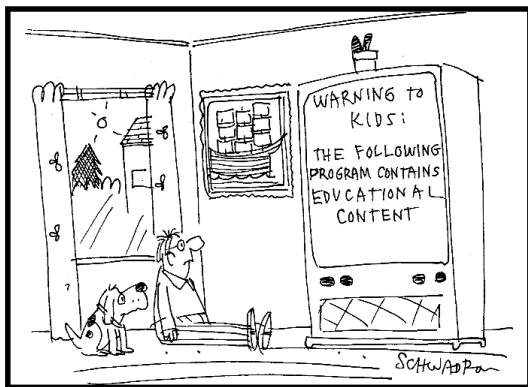
Whilst increasing numbers of passengers are using intercity services, one wonders why 4 carriage trains are still rostered for operation between Newcastle and Sydney. Coupled to the fact, it's causing serious overcrowding and people having to stand up for long distances on these trains. What is the Government doing about it? Obviously nothing! In contrast, passengers on suburban rail services, enjoy exclusively 8 carriage trains, with minor exceptions.

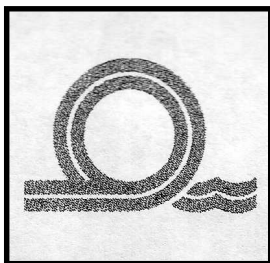
On another note, once again, the Tabloid media is taking pot shots at train drivers. The press is complaining about the number of suspensions for misconduct on duty and running signals at red. Whilst there are suspensions for duty breaches in every sphere of employment. Running signals at red, occurs on isolated occasions. It must be stressed, City Rail trains and diesel rail cars are fitted with trip mechanisms which apply the brake at signals at stop. It's about time the media got its facts right.

Sydney Buses News

Once again the STA is doing nothing about running times for buses operating. Drivers are constantly putting up with increased traffic congestion and passenger loading increases on trips. Witness, the fact of the 400 buses. These buses carry many passengers on long distances. However, running times have only been increased by 4 minutes. Kingsgrove and Waverley drivers who operate 400's, are putting the matter in dispute. The tight running times on this and almost every other route, is proof, that the bus schedulers are incompetent in their duty and should be replaced. If they were employed by another transport employer, they would not have a job. These people have no idea of the harsh realities of driving in heavy traffic and carrying full loads of passengers, which are the main causes of late running. These issues need to be addressed immediately.

However, it's obvious that the STA is increasing the risk of stress and fatigue on drivers, rather than reducing it. These are serious issues and yet the RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) officials, once again, appear to side with management on this issue. Change needs to happen now.





BUS CORRIDOR WRESTLING MANIA

In the last edition of Sparks, we uncovered details of a secret 2 way Wrestling match and 2

man tag team for the semi finals of the final contest to win the prize of the Bondi area STA bus runs – the golden cream of Australian bus services, with 9 million bus rides a year. The contestants were the “Bus Running Times Strangler” from Veolia, “Public Transport Killer Kelowski” from Trans Dev, “Not So Pretty Boy Boyd” from CabCharge/West Bus and “Hurricane, The Bus Service Subsidy Gouger” from Hills.

It was held on the last weekend in March. The venue of the match, surprising, was of all places, the conference room at State Transit HQ at Strawberry Hills. Again a quiet achiever in STA management circles supplied our agent R07 with an identity card to gain entry to the event.

He was disguised as the sleekest of the executive fat cats and sported a concealed digital camera. All the plush leather executive chairs had been removed from the enormous room and a huge cage had been



Our Sparks spy R07 snapped these “down and outs” - some of the “new look”, union executive, who attended the wrestling match - minus union rep girl friend on the side, large gambling tabs, armani suits, silk shirts, and gold chains - now lodging at the not so exclusive “Matthew Talbot Mansions”, due to a growing scandal regarding missing surpluses from the Bus Drivers’ Traffic Fine Fund.

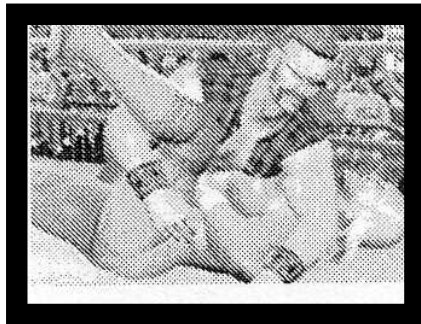
erected to protect against the mayhem, the audience composed of members of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of Australia, the Forbes 500 Billionaires, STA executives and ALP and Liberal politicians. A secret special guest speaker, was Barack Obama, the emperor of Global Capitalism.

Just as the blood and guts match was to begin, there was a ruckus at the entrance of STA HQ. Lo and Behold! A scruffy, ragged trousered mob, of strangely corpulent gents had arrived on clapped out, old bicycles, en route from their new residence at the not so swish "Matthew Talbot Mansions" in Woolloomoolloo. They couldn't even afford the price of the new my zone bus tickets! They appeared to be gate crashing the event. Security guards were about to repel the intruders and even call the police tactical response group. Luckily the CEO of the STA, who by chance was walking past the entrance, noticed the "dirty dozen" and recognised through the grime, his "old chums", the union executive of all people! He warmly welcomed them into the venue.

It appears the union officials were down on their luck. Their luxurious lifestyle had come to an end. The Union BMW Sports Soft Tops and the officials' expensive Armani and Versace suits had to be sold off. Their days in the international jet set, cavorting with Nevada "Chicken Ranch" and "Touch of Class" management consultants were over. Even their Mansions in Point Piper and Bellevue Hill had to be sold. As the origins of mysterious large expenses in the bank statements of the Bus Drivers' Traffic Fine Fund, going back to the 1990's and beyond, were exposed! They needed to support their dependents in view of expected long vacations in the "Big House" and having to pay drivers large refunds of surpluses from the fund.

The match was to be refereed by the ALP NSW Transport Minister and the Liberals Shadow NSW Transport Minister and to commence with much corporate muscle flexing and fake concern for public transport users poses, by the contestants. However, mayhem erupted as our agent R07 took advantage of a brief blackout to cause some mischief. He deftly spread banana skins on the floor in front of union executive, as they were striding triumphantly into the event. Causing them to slide across the room and collide into the contestants and referees, resulting in a wild melee'.

All manner of dirty tricks were used just like in the business world. The strangler from Veolia was soon seen kneeling on the backs of NSW Transport Minister and union executive members applying the sleeper hold on Killer Kelowski from Trans Dev. Whilst the not so Pretty Boy Boyd from Cab Charge had pushed over the Liberal Shadow NSW Minister of Transport onto the Bus Subsidy Gouger from Hills and then head butted him. Barak Obama who had slipped on his military industrial complex supplied cobram armoured vest, became defacto referee. He declared the Veolia Strangler and not so pretty Boy Boyd from CabCharge as the winners of the semi finals.



STA BUSIE NEWS

UPDATE ON THE BUS DRIVERS' TRAFFIC FINE FUND

Since the last article in Sparks about the Traffic Fine Fund, certain papers were found in the Industrial Commission files and handed to the writer for comment.

The papers provide details of the amounts of the surpluses to the fund for seven years – 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008. The total amount of the surplus for these years, totalled \$561,443. What a surplus??? A surprise to me and I hope to you.

Why do we still need to pay into the fund? This money invested would almost pay the fines incurred by drivers every year.

If you check the figures, one dollar per week would cover the cost of the fines. A total ripoff by our greedy union officials and less take home pay for us, the workers.

Why have the depot delegates let the rort continue? Are they worth your support in this year's elections?

These delegates go to monthly meetings at Redfern. Are they doing their job? Or are the meetings, a day off the job? I let you be the judge in this matter.

For many years, the surpluses of the traffic fund were transferred into the general reserves in the Union's books to inflate its profit and to be used for general purposes. Totally, against the rules of the Traffic Fund.

Our campaign has finally been rewarded. In the 2008 union accounts submitted to the Industrial Commission, a bank account called the Traffic Fund appeared with a balance of \$273,000. The short fall is only \$288,443! Only \$288 Thousand dollars!

Where has this money gone? Is this the union officials' slush fund, we have heard rumours about? Has it been used for overseas junkets or to fund the union's donations to the Labor Party or may be to fund mail out campaigns to get themselves re-elected?

Either way these accounts should be laid open so outside people can peruse them and if necessary, police action taken.

For too long the union officials have done what they like. These ELECTED OFFICIALS should be working for the union, not the union working for them.

The figures quoted in this article can be found on the following web site:

www.e-airc.gov.au/139vnsf/financial

If you are having difficulties accessing the particular site and reports just get onto the main site and you can find it from there.

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What's the latest with the Explorer Buses?

Waverley Busie: News came to hand in early April, that both the Red & Blue Explorers are being tendered out to private enterprise. In 3-4 months they could be sold off. Some thought it was an April fools' joke. It certainly isn't. It looks like the Govt is trying to privatise the STA by stealth. We need urgent action to foil this move.

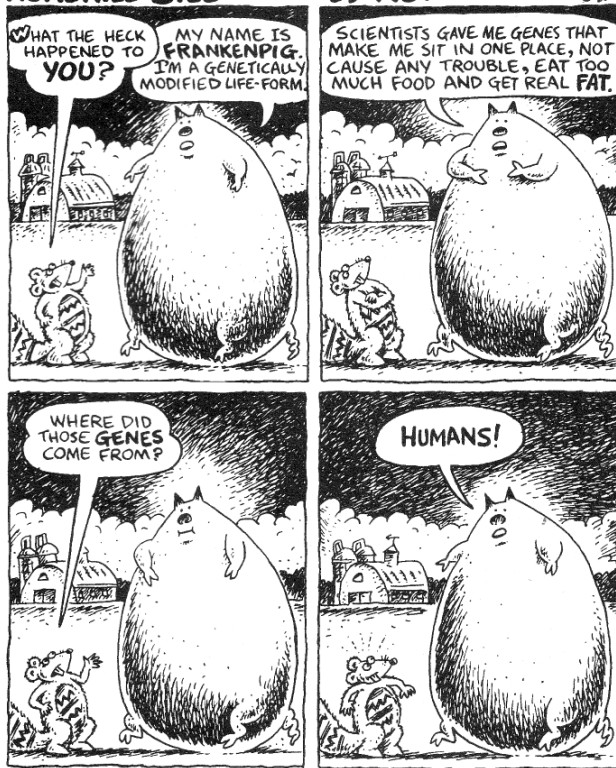
Sparks: What's happening on the road?

WB: In recent weeks, there was a very serious incident involving a PM driver on his last run. The driver was spat on and threatened with a broken bottle by a passenger, resulting in the driver getting carried away in the affair. It is alleged that his assailant was bashed 35 times and kicked about 5 times. I have no actual evidence but I can only assume, that the driver was re-

acting to some story in his past when he may have been the victim of some abuse. He may have also seen himself in a life or death situation, and this motivated his extreme reaction. Rather than just telling his assailant to get off the bus.

An important contribution to the incident was the vulnerability of PM drivers to assault and abuse from unruly passengers due to a lack of police and transit officer patrols late at night. In Brisbane, there are regular late night transit officer patrols. Why not here?

The media seized on the incident and placed graphic images from the digital camera footage on YouTube and other media sources. Who gave them the footage? Did the police provide it? Why is YouTube seeking the glory of people looking at gory? Why is this being allowed? Don't TV stations have other more important news to focus upon? Why hasn't the ABC Media Watch program taken up the story? Why didn't the union take action to have it blocked?



If I were in a similar situation and was violently attacked, I would attempt to take evasive action. However, if unrealistic, given the circumstances, I would try to subdue my assailant. I'd take the risk of losing my job and facing a gaol sentence, in the case of a life or death situation.

Latest news is that the driver has been sacked by the bosses and is appealing the decision. He is also facing charges over excessive use of force in defending himself and a possible gaol sentence.

Sparks: What else is happening on the road?

WB: Recently when I was driving a 313 to Coogee on the tramway cutting a ruckus occurred on my bus. It involved a well dressed retired elderly man and 6 muslim school girls. After the man got off the bus, I spoke with the girls. They told me, that the man had been engaging in obscene racist abuse towards them. The hostile approach of this man, probably also stemmed from a story in his past. Why on earth was he doing it?

Sparks: What's the latest news with Randwick PM drivers?

WB: I was recently speaking with a Randwick driver who operates 343 PM runs and was on his last run. He mentioned to me that an alarming situation has developed with the PM 343's. He complained, that now he had to leave passengers behind on the last run of the night due to a lack of foresight in providing adequate bus services. There is quite a lop sided situation with the 343's. During the day there is a surplus of buses. Whilst in the night there is a severe shortage. Who is the bus scheduler who hides out at Strawberry Hills and cream - the loose cannon who is behind these bus service cut backs? Is he, the megalomaniac who compels drivers to leave passengers behind in the middle of the night?

Sparks challenges this fat cat to get out of his comfortable basket and blanket at Strawberry Hills and go down to Randwick Depot and explain to 343 PM drivers the reasons for this malicious behaviour! Maybe this is an example of the "Me, Me" phenomena. Where people who get high up jobs, become transformed for the worse.

Sparks: What's the latest with the bus tickets?

WB: Strawberry Hills, you have done it again! The ticketing system has become increasingly poorly managed. No provision has been made for the training of shop assistants at convenience stores and newsagents regarding the issuing of bus tickets. Consequently, particularly passengers from overseas are having free rides by using the wrong tickets. It's likely the STA is losing millions of dollars which could have gone to paying us a decent pay rise. In place of the recent inadequate 6% pa rise in two instalments of 3% pa.

Sparks: What is your outlook for the upcoming NSW State elections?

WB: I have been dismayed to learn some drivers are considering voting for the Liberals. They are certainly unaware of how grim it can be under the Liberals. 18 years ago when the Liberal Greiner Govt. was in power in NSW, it was behind many attacks on our conditions such as increased fining of drivers, Kangaroo Courts, uncertainty about Govt. cuts and the threat of individual contracts. It was a major motivation for me to write articles for the magazine so as to inspire the grass roots to fight these attacks.

I was recently speaking to a Moari driver who mentioned to me that the introduction of individual contracts in New Zealand had a very severe effect on its economy. One notorious example where they were introduced was in the Yellow Bus Company. The wide spread introduction of individual contracts in NZ was a major reason, many workers left to come to Australia. It resulted in a huge loss in workers' extra wages and the lack of opportunity to work overtime. For workers, the lack of overtime, meant that the excitement and motivation went out of the job and propensity to spend greatly decreased. In contrast, to what the business world was predicting, which was that the NZ economy would be fantastic, there was a severe down turn.

The outlook of the Liberal Party is to see people as a commodity and is in line with the mindset of the STA bosses who see passengers as customers and proceed to cut runs and try to look good. Those who are disgruntled with the ALP due to their swing toward big business should consider voting for the smaller alternative parties.

The likely future course of a Liberal Govt in NSW, is apparent in South Australia. Following being elected into office, the Liberals Govt moved rapidly to privatise public transport. In the Barossa Valley, many rail lines were ripped up and stations closed. The role of the railways in enhancing tourism in the area was disregarded.

The best Govt. I am aware of in Australia was Don Dunstan's in South Australia in the 1970's. It took a lot of new initiatives and was in stark contrast to previous Governments in the state and also interstate which were still under the sway of conservative ways and big business. One important initiative of the Don Dunstan Govt. was the purchase of private bus companies and their integration into the state owned public transport authority.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What's the latest with the Enterprise Bargain Agreement (EBA)?

Leichhardt Busie: Some weeks ago there was a union meeting at the depot where the EBA proposal was discussed. We learnt that for the 6% pa rise composed of two instalments of 3%, there will be important trade off's demanded by the bosses. The bosses are wanting casuals introduced. They say the casuals will be just used for filling part time shifts. However, this will cut out DOC's. Whilst once casuals are introduced, they will become permanent and spread out to all other shifts. Latest news is that the proposed EBA was approved.

“THE SPICE OF LIFE IN THE STA”

Sparks What's the latest with the bosses?

LB: I have noticed a new nefarious trend in harassment by the bosses. In “quiet periods” where there are few passenger complaints about us, the bosses are “spicing things up”. They are getting creative and inventing complaints to keep the pressure on us.

In one case recently, the bosses claimed that had video evidence of misbehaviour by a driver. However, when several union reps accompanied the driver who was facing disciplinary ac-

tion to a meeting with management, there was no evidence of the alleged misbehaviour by the driver on the video footage viewed.

In another case, the bosses claimed to receive an email from a passenger who complained that a driver had gone through a red light and was “steam rolling” passengers. Suspiciously the email used bus times which were exactly those on the driver’s journal. Indicating a management “fit up” of the driver. As a result of this frame up, the driver was issued with an E1.

In regard to the trainees, the bosses are demanding that they meet the current ridiculous running times for routes, stemming from the constant shave back of running times. Consequently, the bosses have plenty of excuses to jump on the trainees.

Latest news is that all our runs have been rescheduled and the running times are just as bad.

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

We are finally seeing the departure of the staff supervisor, but alas another depot is the next desto. Bad luck to Kingsgrove. Time to get organised I guess. They say our new depot managers are a pair of new pussy cats. Ok and Ko (alias 999). They have been named. The next issue will describe round two in the battle.

We had an urgent union meeting in late March and our elected delegate turned up, at least for 15 minutes. He seems to have thrown the towel in, as it is rumoured that he is running for Redfern (union head office) in this year’s elections.

The hard sell was handed over to the pretender to the depot delicate position. He is as a Boer, a boar and a bore. We nick name him Mr.B.

The meeting was about the re structure of the routes in the southern region mainly the 406. I understand Kingsgrove has been using these streets for many years but the State Transit solution was to negate the union delegate’s position on the issue with help from the Redfern used car salesman. So no complaints have seen the light of day.

Our Driving Instructor deemed the area around Summer Hill to be too dangerous for our low floors, but our depot manager (a non bus driver) over ruled him.

A typical answer from a public servant. They employ these highly trained personnel but take no notice. As depot managers are always right.

After a review involving the union, a dispute notice was issued. It was decided to cut trees, move signage and only B12 to be used. A standard answer from State Transit. This is their only solution, as our trusty mercs have all gone.

We have been handed books for the new runs, but alas, they have mistakes in them. Another bungle.

One great outcome from the restructure, is that the many complaints from the public, have sent management into free fall, leaving drivers alone temporarily.

It’s about time, grass roots drivers’ skills were used in developing these restructures. As the so called experts from the Government, always get it wrong.

Maritime Transport News

MUA delegate Bob Carnegie removed from offshore job

Bob Carnegie was told this February that he was “not required back” on the Ensco 7500 rig. He has been effectively sacked by Chevron, who hired the rig to find North West Shelf gas deposits. Carnegie was at his home waiting to return to work for his next three-week swing when the labour-hire company employing him, Offshore Marine Services (OMS), told him that Ensco did not want him back. OMS and Ensco bosses only come clean about his removal after MUA (Maritime Union of Australia) members on the rig took industrial action on February 19 and 20. The bosses explained that Chevron had put Carnegie on a “no fly” list for air transport between the mainland and the island closest to the rig. Carnegie was removed without formally being sacked, without any official charges, warnings or any written communication. Soon after starting work on the rig in November last year he became an MUA delegate and chalked up a number of wins over management. The first was getting a \$75 a day “hard laying” payment for workers on the Ensco 7500 rig in recognition of its excessive noise. The payment is backdated to March 30, 2009 and will continue until the noise issues are satisfactorily resolved.

The MUA hailed this win as the first ever hard laying payment for rig workers in the offshore oil and gas industry. Carnegie helped to win the move from four-week to three-week swings (three weeks of 12-hour shifts, then three weeks off) for the seafarers on the Ensco 7500, which other workers on the rig already had. He led a union ban that was placed on sub-standard scaffolding used to climb into the rig’s temporary living quarters, as workers had previously slipped and injured themselves on it. Management eventually accommodated the seafarers elsewhere. In early January this year Carnegie intervened after a worker was asked to do some painting unsafely without a proper work platform. Management again backed down after being shown that performing the work in such a manner was against company policy. On January 18 Carnegie returned home after his three-week swing. After arriving home, he was told by workmates of rumours of his sacking. He immediately contacted MUA officials. Almost two weeks later he was told that there was no flight for him to return to work. He remains on full pay while OMS try to find him other work. They “just” don’t have work for him with Chevron and Ensco.

It is now all too common for delegates on the rigs, the ships and the wharves to be victimised and sacked. The MUA needs to serve notice to every maritime employer that, if delegates continue to be discriminated against and sacked for doing their job, we will go into battle to defend them. Bob Carnegie has been active in the union movement for decades. In 1985 he was the first person jailed during Queensland’s bitter SEQEB electricity dispute. He was Honorary President of the Seamen’s Union of Australia Qld Branch (1988-1994); MUA

Southern Qld Branch Organiser (1994-1998); and a Builders' Labourers Federation (QLD) organiser (2004-2008). During the 1998 Patrick dispute he worked with Californian long-shore workers to launch the rank-and-file led boycott of the scab-loaded Columbus Canada. International Longshore and Warehouse Union Locals 13 & 63 defied secondary boycott laws for 17 days in a genuine act of international solidarity.

Members are encouraged to email resolutions in support of Bob to your MUA branch, the MUA National Office, Bob

IE1917@HOTMAIL.COM AND THE ENSCO 7500 CREW 500@HOTMAIL.COM WHO HAVE BACKED BOB UP 100 PERCENT.

(Article from "Vigilance" No.44 (Feb.28 2010) "Vigilance" is a socialist bulletin for MUA members in Sydney produced by Shane Bentley – the "Port Botany Wharfie". See www.vigilanceBulletin.org)

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In issues 132 and 134, the role of the Human Resources department of V/Line has been raised. In this issue two salaried employees have come forward to Sparks to talk about this department. As in the previous issues names have been changed.

V-LINE ADMIN STAFF NEWS

Sparks: It is rare for salaried employees to speak out. What has made you come forward?

Seamus: I work in a salaried position within V-Line and I have come forward because I am disgusted at the way some sections of V/Line management treat the lower grade employees.

Sheona: I work in head office and I am disgusted at the way Human Resources treat V/Line employees.

Sparks: You have put your job in jeopardy by coming forward.

Sheona: I have but you have got to stand up and be counted.

Seamus: Where I work there was an incident where a passenger jumped into a train. The conductor was stood down and was hauled before Human Resources and given a warning. A platform supervisor who witnessed the incident was spoken to by a Union Official and said the train had departed when the person jumped on. When the platform supervisor was asked to appear at a future enquiry, they declined, as management pressured the person not to appear, thus the case was not reopened.

Sparks: Why?

Seamus: Management wanted to bung the conductor and frightened the supervisor by saying they would make it hard for the supervisor in the future.

Sheona: I was disgusted when I heard of the incident but you see there is a wombat in Human Resources who acts like a Bully. It is either her way or no way. In fact Human Resources em-

plays about thirty people and most are women. In fact they think they are the law. They fabricate evidence about people and try to bend the rules.

Sparks: I have heard they don't want existing employees in new positions.

Seamus: You are correct. One of the employees at Southern Cross applied for a Conductor position and guess what happened?

Sparks: What?

Seamus: The idiots in Human Resources lost his resume so he was never interviewed. He was upset. I wonder whether Human Resources deliberately lost the application.

Sheona: They would have lost that application on purpose. You see they interviewed a large number of people from outside about 12 months ago for the Conductor positions and drew on them when vacancies occur. Then they compare the internal applicants against the external applicants and then they say the internal applicants are not up to standard.

Sparks: No wonder morale is low.

Sheona: You can say that again. They advertised for 20 positions for Train Drivers internally. A large number of persons applied. In some cases the department mislaid a number of applicants' aptitude test results and made the applicants sit for the tests again.

Sparks: This is incompetence.

Sheona: It is but that is not all. After interviews, they narrowed the persons selected to 22 applicants. They sent all these persons for medicals hoping that two persons would fail, and thus have their 20 persons. Unfortunately all passed thus Human Resources had to knock out two people.

Shamus: They contacted unsuccessful persons by phone. One of the persons was running a train and when told was upset. Years ago you were interviewed and told you were successful provided you passed a medical. These clowns seem to bend the rules.

Sheona: The same thing happened when they asked persons to apply for the position of Authorised Officer.

Sparks: What happened?

Sheona: They advertised internally for a number of authorised officer positions. A number of conductors applied and went for an interview and all of them were told they were not successful. What these conductors were not told was the Government had not appropriated any money to train these authorised officers. In fact V/Line advertised for these positions externally and obtained trained persons from Connex and Yarra Trams.

Sparks: In fact one conductor said the Department is corrupt.

Seamus: It is not only Human Resources who use corrupt practices but some supervisors use corrupt practices.

Sparks: In what way.

Seamus: Well they advertised for a number of positions. Job vacancies for internal positions are supposed to be placed on the notice board. These selfish salaried officers made sure that these notices did not go on the notice boards.

Sparks: Job vacancies are supposed to be placed on the notice board.

Seamus: Yes, but these people thought that by not placing these notices on the board, they would be the only applicants, a country depot placed the notices on the board.

Sheona: These notices should be placed on notice boards. Also Human Resources are trying to place job applications on line. The problem is that a number of people are not on email.

Sparks: This is discrimination.

Sheona: It is and they have changed the process without any consultation with the employees.

Seamus: Yes. They should have notified the employees of the changes and should train employees how to use email, but they don't want to train employees as it costs money.

Sparks: I must close this interview, but I will give you the final say.

Sheona: I am disgusted with Human Resources. I think they are arrogant and treat long serving employees as an endangered species.

Seamus: In concluding what makes myself sick is that Human Resources do not like people who have worked a long time in the Railways and the impression I got is that long term employees are not wanted. Finally I am disgusted at the way some of my fellow workers do in their work mates to gain favours with management.

V-LINE TRAIN DRIVERS' NEWS

Sparks: Rastus and Roscoe, It is good to see you supply further news to Sparks.

Roscoe: You may be interested to know that after 11 years V/Line is recruiting drivers again.

Rastus: For years new drivers were recruited from the electric trains, but the background of the drivers recruited from the 1970's is conducting. You see when Country services were reduced, the option was the sparks (electric trains) or out the door.

Roscoe: In fact we are getting some female trainees. This is good for equality but once again those people in Human Resources have interfered.

Sparks: In what way?

Rastus & Roscoe: The rumour going around is that Human Resources have some of these trainees to set up some drivers on matters of sexual harassment. You see, a driver's job is stressful and a driver on the spur of the moment may say something, he may regret to a trainee. Then the trainee blurts to Human Resources, thus giving Human Resources an excuse to sack the driver.

Rastus: I hope the trainees have had the guts to tell the drivers what Human Resources told them. We, drivers have had to find out on the rumour mill. You see Human Resources want to break the drivers and have yes men. You see the drivers stand up over issues of Health & Safety, Defective Trains and maintaining the award. You see it was the drivers, who smashed National Express. When they had the V-Line franchise, they tried to smash the drivers.

For example they tried to reduce annual leave entitlements from 5 weeks to 4 weeks. We just banned working on rest days and worked to rule. After one week, National Express capitulated.

lated. When they walked out of the V-Line franchise, we cheered. You see Human Resources observed our fight.

Roscoe: Yes they did! V/Line reverted to Government control and a whole new group of Human Resources people were recruited. This mob are trying to break the Railway Culture and to succeed, they will do what they want.

Sparks : I hear management tries to have meetings with the drivers to bypass the Union?

Roscoe: You are correct. It is called toolbox talk.

Rastus: At the last meeting of “Toolbox Talk”, a driver got up and spoke about why the Driver calls the Conductor up to the cab of the Sprinter and Velocity trains. The driver wants to talk to the Conductor in private and not over the radio as passengers may hear sensitive issues. The driver said it was low for Human Resources to dob in a Driver or Conductor. The reason management is dobbing them in is that in case an accident occurs, both driver and conductor will have to be counselled.

Roscoe: Yes management is frightened both will be off work for a week.

Rastus: Doctor Dolittle and the goon from Human Resources just ignored what the driver had to say. The other drivers were disgusted. Now you see why drivers will not turn up at these meetings.

Sparks: I regard these Toolbox Talk meetings as a way management tries to break the driver. Also in the last issue was the first contribution by drivers to Sparks.

What was the reaction on the job?

Roscoe and Rastus: The last issue had a real impact. The issue was well received, but issue 132 was received by drivers even better.

Sparks: You mean the article by Misha and Manfred on conductor supervisors?

Roscoe: This issue was placed on notice boards around V/Line and it was quickly removed, as it was removed, it reappeared on the notice boards.

Rastus: V/Line management conducted a witch hunt trying to find out who wrote the article. They are threatening to sack the two conductors.

Roscoe: Let them try it. If they do, they would have touched all V/Line employees.

Roscoe and Rastus: V/Line Management called all the Conductor Service Supervisors into a meeting when they all passed a motion of confidence in support of the supervisor. The other Conductor Service Supervisor who laughed at this person, behind his back, did not have the guts to speak against the way he was bullying conductors in his region.

Finally in conducting this interview, we would like to thank SPARKS for printing our interview in the last issue. We encourage V/Line employees to contribute to SPARKS. Remember the address is on page two. Remember SPARKS fights for the Rank and File. Remember don't be scared “STAND UP and BE COUNTED”.

International Transport Workers' News

UK - Railway maintenance workers vote to strike, further action brewing in the industry

RMT(Rail Union) members have voted strongly for strike action, in what stands to be the first national strike of rail workers in 16 years. Other workers including signallers and electrical supply controllers may also strike, following their ballots in the coming weeks.

Railway maintenance workers have voted for strike action in an RMT-organised ballot, with the prospect of strikes over the Easter bank holiday - the most effective time to take action – still on the table. Network Rail plans to axe 1,500 jobs, alongside introducing increased week-end working for its staff. According to the RMT, workers are concerned about the safety implications of the redundancies alongside an increasing workload, antisocial hours and the prospect of compulsory redundancies. Network Rail's plans have already faced criticism (including from the Office of Rail Regulation and 150 MPs) on safety grounds. 77% voted for strike action, with 89% voting for action short of a strike. The turnout for the ballot was 65%. No strike dates will be announced until the 19th of March. Meanwhile, further strike action is brewing amongst other sections of workers in the industry. 5,500 signal workers could strike following the announcement of their ballot, due to take place next week. Even Network Rail management has conceded that a signallers' strike would paralyse significant sections of the rail network. The RMT has suggested the prospect of a single strike by both sets of workers. On top of this, the TSSA union announced today that it would ballot 1,600 of its members including electrical controllers over a 0.8% pay offer over the coming weeks. The union announces the result of a separate ballot of 2,000 of its members tomorrow.

Latest news is that a 4 day national strike by signallers and maintenance workers was to commence on 6th. However, Network Rail has been successful in getting the courts to outlaw the signallers strike. Resulting in union officials suspending both strikes.

“Rail Workers’ Fightback” Belgium

Thu, 18 Feb 2010

A fatal crash that killed eighteen people was the final straw for railway workers in Belgium, who have spontaneously organised strikes and blockades around the country. Their courageous move has of course brought short-term disruption for passengers, but it has also put pressure on the national railway company to implement much-needed safety measures.

A driver was among those killed on Monday, when two trains collided in Halle, fifteen kilometres from Brussels. Even before the black box recorders had been recovered, Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Belges bosses were claiming that one of the drivers failed to

stop at a red light. They were later forced to admit that one of the trains had not been fitted with a security system that automatically switches on a train's brake at every red signal. This system was recommended in the wake of a crash in 2001.

According to LibCom:

“Machinists and technical workers have blockaded depots across the country with services most affected in Wallonia. Train drivers and signal workers are also observing the strike. So far the depots at Braine-le-Comte, Mons, Liège, Ath, Saint-Ghislain, La Louvière, Charleroi, Namur, Ottignies, Tournai and Louvain are reported as being entirely blockaded by strikers and the Belgian Rail Company (SNCB) is admitting that 85% of its depots are affected by the strike.”

Union leaders have denounced the wildcat action, effectively siding with the bosses who have failed to roll-out required safety measures, with Jos Dignette of the ACOD union declaring that “The situation is not good...I don't understand why some have decided to declare war at this moment.”

<http://www.facebook.com/l/d8b64;dreaming-neon-black.blogspot.com/2010/02/workers-fightback-belgian-rail-workers.html>

USA - MUNI Workers and Riders United

Thurs, 4/3/10

Hundreds of MUNI (San Francisco Urban Transit System) workers from TWU Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 250-A, riders and community organizations rallied and marched in downtown San Francisco to oppose the MTA (Urban Transit Authority) proposed budget cuts and threatened layoffs last night. The march began at Powell and Market and went down Market to rally in front of the MTA offices calling for the cuts to be on the Mayor Newsom appointed, over paid, executive managers. The march then went to City Hall for a spirited spontaneous forum led by TWU cable car driver and union organizer Eric Williams who explained what the workers are forced to put up with and called for unity between MUNI workers and riders. The overwhelming sentiment of the protest was in solidarity with the TWU workers.

[Http://www.indybay.org](http://www.indybay.org)

UKRAINE - Trolleybus Drivers have Wildcat Strike in Kiev

by akai on Mar 29 2010

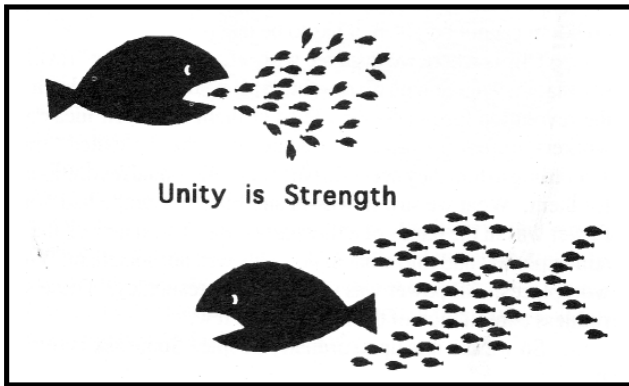
Morning trolleybus drivers went on strike in Ukraine. About 100 drivers went on strike this morning. Their union does not support the protest and considers the strike illegal. The man-

agement of the depot forced some drivers from the second and weekend shifts to come in to work, where they found they were to act as strike breakers. The drivers went on strike because they are owed back pay and are demanding immediate payment. They also protested against the liquidation of bonuses and deteriorating work conditions. As a result of the reaction of the existing union, workers from the strike decided to form a new, independent one.



ANOTHER VIEW OF THE GRASS ROOTS ORGANISING MEETING

A well attended meeting of rank and file RTBU (Rail Tram & Bus Union) members was held on Sunday March 21st in Surry Hills to discuss strategies and ways in which the union can be revitalised at the grassroots level. One key topic for discussion was organising a ticket to challenge the current leadership group in the union elections due later this year. Active members and delegates are being encouraged to join this grassroots push to rid our union of the overpaid bureaucrats and careerists currently in control. A number of members present expressed the view that the current ruling group have been in power too long and have lost touch with the base of the membership and with our day to day issues and concerns at work. Another key topic for discussion was the need for workers to develop an industrial strategy that can get members more involved in the processes of the union and mount a real challenge to ongoing employer attacks on jobs and conditions.



The current round of enterprise bargaining provides an opportunity for members to stake a claim for securing decent pay and conditions in light of the fact that much has been lost and given away in recent agreements between the union hierarchy and the employer. The real power of the union lies in the unity of rank and file workers on the job. Members are regularly subjected to second-rate deals because our power is not being utilised - the employer does not fear any consequences for the massive lay-offs and other cut-backs they keep imposing on us. Until members demonstrate to the bosses how strong we are, using our industrial muscle, we will never reach our potential as a union.

We need to meet belligerence from the bosses with on the job organisation and direct action. It is important for active and engaged members to keep involved and encourage their fellow workers to stay united on the job against attacks from management and apathy from the union office. After all, the union is not the officials, the union is us, the rank and file membership. Rank and file meetings will continue to be held on a monthly basis for the rest of this year. Anyone interested in attending should contact Sparks for details.

by Max Stirner

Getting the Ball Rolling continued recall from their elected positions if they were not performing to the expectations of the rank and file.
From Page 5

Some of the conditions that candidates would expect

to agree to include:

1. Members Representatives will be elected by a majority vote of all members.
2. Representatives so elected have no authority and are directed to carry out the wishes of the majority of members. They must also only speak on behalf of members
3. Election of Representatives is of limited tenure (eg maximum of 1 or 2 years) after which they must relinquish their position and elections held for their positions.
4. No decisions should be carried out in the name of members without first consulting them and gaining consensus. Preferably this should be done through organised mass meetings where debate takes place. This position should especially be reinforced when bargaining takes place between the union and management.
5. Elected Representatives must regularly hold public meetings to keep members informed and up to date on issues which concern them. It also gives members a chance to voice opinions and to
6. give feedback. Newsletters, direct email, and any other method that is effective will be used to keep members informed.
7. Workers Representatives if remunerated for their efforts will receive wages payment which is less than or equal to their position held currently in the Public Transport Industry at the time of election.
8. Any Members Representative or Delegate can be removed (right of recall) by the vote of a majority of members at any time if members do not believe they are performing satisfactorily in their interests. Hopefully this would be done at mass meeting of members where the member or members who are being moved against have a chance to express their position or view in defence of themselves.
9. Accountability for members funds will be audited independently. Members may question the use of funds and peruse the fund at any time. All financial transactions will be transparent and will rely on gaining the approval of a majority of members.
10. The organisation although recognising the need to have legal representation will rely primarily on the mobilising efforts of members to achieve objectives determined by the membership. A mass meeting of members will decide the form, duration and date of any industrial action. Industrial action cannot take place without the majority consent of members.
11. There will be no trading of working conditions for pay rises. All negotiation positions will be put before the membership.
12. Negotiating committees will be chosen by the members of the union.
13. Rules of the organisation may be changed from time to time with the full consent of membership. Rule changes may be proposed by any member but must be put before the membership before they are binding on members.

See Page 24

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 paid 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.

Continued From Page 23

14. While elected reps may belong to a political party their allegiance to the union and its members must be paramount in any transaction or decision making.

We ask all rail workers and members of the STA who are fed up with the current situation to get involved in the campaign to defend working conditions by supporting the team that is committed to work with you. To comment on any aspect of the rank and file group please contact Sparks Magazine. Later we expect to be able to host open forums where members can have their say.

What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic