

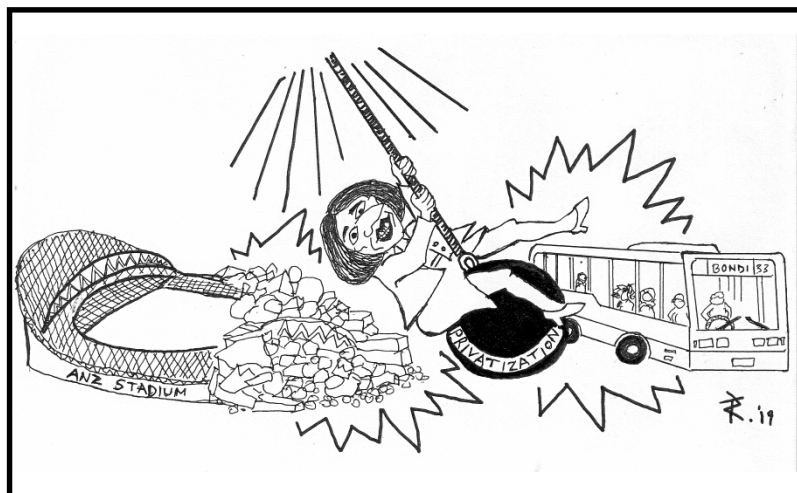
No.162

April - May 2019

# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**GLADYS IS BACK!  
MORE CUTS TO COME!  
MOBILISE NOW!**



NSW Railways News;

A Tale of a Cover-up,

"The Secret State"

Bus Drivers' Open Letter;

Sydney Buses News;

Victorian Railway News;

International Transport News;

Leichhardt Depot Wildcat;

## **EDITORIAL**

**Welcome to another edition of Sparks.**

**Some of the most important news affecting the NSW Railways and other sectors of public transport is the re-election of the Berejiklian Liberal Govt. Whilst Transport Minister Constance has made new threats to further push public transport privatisation and wiping out drivers.** Whilst the ALP was silent about seriously fighting privatisation and reversing privatisation such as in the case of Newcastle buses and Region 6 in Sydney. Intriguingly the RTBU hierarchy did not advocate to the membership voting for the ALP. In this edition we discuss the elections and its ramifications and the critical importance of organising on the job for direct action to hurl back the Liberals gauntlet of attacks. (See article page 3.) In this edition we also look at changes in the management organisation structure in the railways and how it facilitates rorts by the bosses and attacks on the lower echelons. (See article page 6.)

Some of the most important news in Sydney Buses is the wildcat strike “mass sickie” at Leichhardt depot of Transit Systems in early December 2018. It was over savage tightening of bus running times and a range of other issues. An important back drop was similar action by Hillsbus drivers in November 2018. Needless to say the RTBU hierarchy has covered up the whole affair at Leichhardt. This action by Leichhardt drivers shows the way forward to meet the renewed and intensified Liberal onslaught and the importance of coordinated action between depots and all sectors of public transport. (See article page 11.) The privatisation of Region 6 has had major flow-ons in the remaining “rump” of State Transit. In this edition, we put the spotlight on these new attacks, which will likely feature in clauses in the next enterprise agreement in the STA. (See article page 13.)

**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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**Web Site: [User.tpg.com.au/retepsni/MembersVoice](http://User.tpg.com.au/retepsni/MembersVoice)**

# N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

## Do Elections Change Anything?

*by Crimson Coconut*

**Another election in N.S.W. and soon another Federal Election. For us, as workers, nothing really changes. Change does not come from the people we elect. It comes when we, as a mass of people, believe and act together with desire to make change happen.**

Labor failed in the NSW election despite the massive corruption, privatisations and cronyism of the Berejiklian Government. We are now saddled with 4 more years of job cuts, outsourcing and privatisations. The situation is desperate but not hopeless.

The problem for Labor was that it never stood for anything really. The West-Connex Motorway was not opposed, there was no real action aimed at stopping the privatisation of public transport and they were all for the Western Sydney Airport at Badgerys Creek despite a considerable amount of public opposition. The glaring failures of the Berejiklian Government were not opposed in general.

Except for one issue, Labor concentrated their campaign on the tearing down of Sydney's 20 year old Olympic Stadium at a total cost which could approach \$2.5 billion (source ABC News). During the election they pointed out the poor prioritisation of the project and the waste of public money which could be better spent on things such as transport, hospitals and schools which are in dire need of significant funding. There was no mention of the privatisation and outsourcing of services and loss of jobs already instituted in our hospitals, public transport and across the public sector.

The Transport Minister, Andrew Constance, in a highly contested election, for his seat of Bega, announced during the election that if elected he would remove drivers from all trains and continue the privatisation of public transport. This is despite a commitment from the RTBU that a deal has been struck on retaining train crews. Clearly Constance has a particular hatred for train crews, maybe that is because of their potential for bringing the system to its knees. That fear of the Transport Minister is probably misplaced, as the power of trains crews in the union has not been used for several decades. How though will they react as their jobs disappear?

Will they just roll over without a substantial industrial campaign just as nothing in the way of a campaign was organised for the private operation of Inner West Buses. Luke Foley (previous Labor Opposition Leader) was there for a short while in the campaign to stop private owners operating the buses with some broad, vague, promises on reversing the private operation, yet nothing was organised with the workforce affected. Foley resigned as leader over a sexual assault matter and disappeared into the ether along with the issue of privatisation of the buses.

Several public meetings, which included the Unions, Greens and Labor were held in Leichhardt Town Hall a while back to condemn the Berejiklian Government, but little else eventuated. At no stage was the general membership (those the most affected) of the union mobilised to create a movement which could have halted the proposals by bringing the Government to its knees by way of industrial action. By the time of the election Labor had a new leader and these issues which were ongoing were largely forgotten.

During the NSW election the RTBU produced a wish list called "State Election Priorities 2019" which, while commendable, realistically was not going to be acted on by the Union, the LNP Government or the ALP.

It called for:

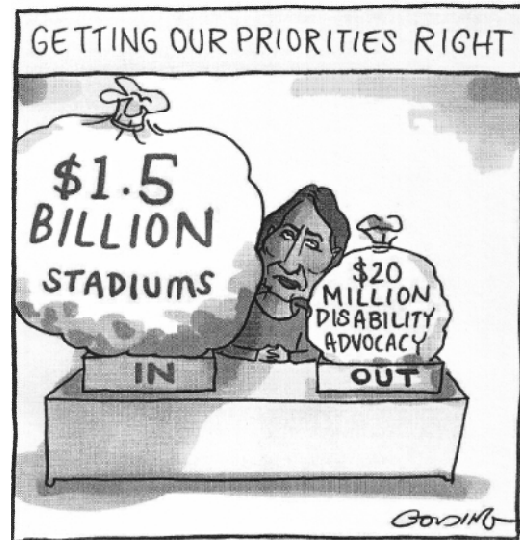
- The stopping of privatisation of public transport,
- The restoration of public operation of region 6 bus routes
- Saving the Bankstown Line by keeping it in public hands
- retaining train crews
- building trains and buses locally instead of overseas

...and so forth, all good aims and wishes.

Found here: <https://www.rtbuexpress.com.au/rtbu-nsw-election-priorities/>

For the first time ever, that we can remember, the RTBU never openly advocated a vote for the ALP, so union members were left to decide who would best serve their interests. A wish-list it remains, without action by the community and union members. It is clear that the unions cannot enunciate a clear plan to bring about the changes that they merely talk about. At the heart of the general malaise within the transport union leadership is their willingness to work with anyone except their own members.

The challenges ahead are considerable with a Government of vandals and wreckers re-elected. The privatisation project of public transport will continue now at an accelerated pace in wake of LNP statements during the election. That they have been returned will be all the justification that the Government needs. This is at a time when the ALP opposition is hamstrung and paralysed. The Greens and smaller parties have said that they will continue the fight for better and bigger public transport although the real fight must come from the community and those directly affected.



It is important for union activists and the workforce in public transport to keep abreast of developments that are likely to be raised in the further privatisation of public transport. In a way the failure of the union leadership in NSW to confront privatisation by mobilising is disappointing. While we all might also lament the election outcome, a Labor Government to save the day is also unrealistic considering their track record.

Class consciousness (workers realising their own strengths and where they stand in relation to the owners and bosses) only comes about through engaging in the struggle. For example, the failure of the union movement as a whole in effectively confronting the building of private tollways, at public expense, instead of investing in public health, education, public transport and so forth sets us all back. Only a full mobilisation of communities and the union movement, which must include all members, from the ground up can halt the wholesale selloff of publicly used services. A mass campaign is needed also to save public service jobs.

The failure of Labor and the unions in NSW to confront the reality of what is needed in NSW takes away the class elements so essential for understanding the situation from a worker's point of view. The ALP has become a poor imitation of the conservative LNP government. As some people in the press have said, the voters of NSW elected the real neo-liberal party rather than the pretend LNP. The tactic of union leaderships mobilising union members to elect a Labor Government rather than fight what they are confronted with is fraught with danger. As we have said in the past, what if the ALP lost? Even if they won wouldn't it be capitulation to a new boss, a lesser evil?

It is we, on the shop floor, who must take up the fight for ending such a thing as the salary cap on public sector wages, fighting for our jobs and confronting the monster that is privatisation. The LNP have a renewed vigour after winning the election so comprehensively. The task ahead is going to be a difficult one. There are no union elections in the pipeline during the majority of the remaining term of the Berejiklian Government. So there is no chance of getting a union leadership that is willing to confront the Neoliberal juggernaut.

Instead we need to organise and be prepared to build a movement of our own, with the general community, that is prepared and capable of confronting the attack on all our services and all

of us. If the unions come to the party and pitch-in all's good and well, but don't hold your breath waiting. Start talking to your fellow workers and get their ideas. Discuss and work together on the common objective of liberating us once and for all. We all have nothing to lose at this stage and everything to gain by working together.



## A Tale of a Cover-up!

*“A cover-up is an attempt, whether successful or not, to conceal evidence of wrongdoing, error, incompetence or other embarrassing information”.*

**So, let’s begin, it is first necessary to set the scene. About 30 years ago (mid 1980’s) real business, the multinational corporations and their management gurus developed a management model to decentralise operations and create standalone business units focused purely on each area of expertise in a particular product and/or service. This required that a certain portion of the decision-making process be pushed down to the lower ranks of management. The idea being that this would provide a sense of ownership and management would be more inclined to feel as if they were running their own business rather than just working a job.**

Decades later, along come our politicians and their lackeys in management, thinking in true deluded style that they’ve reinvented the wheel and they start creating “business units” out of what are our public sector services, owned and paid for by the taxpayer. Of course, the idea was doomed from the start because government organizations are created by legislation to provide a service, including those that specifically override the profit motive in favor of a public good. The idea being that services are provided as a public good and not as a profit-making enterprise. A minor technicality in the minds of our politicians and their lackeys in management. They would simply visualize the future and make it so and of course when you don’t really need to make profit and tax revenue never runs out, well anything is possible right, you can even pretend you’re running a business.

To give this “new” vision the facade of credibility, low level managers had to be given fancy real business-like titles like director, executive director, lead manager etc, inflated salaries and of course certain decision-making authority so that they would act and behave as though they were business owners and not just overpaid lackeys, in public sector jobs.

As you might imagine this in itself requires a certain amount of manipulation of the laws, but we might cover that another time.

For now, our tale focuses on low level managers being given high levels of discretion in their decision-making and wouldn’t you know it, that is exactly a “condition which may allow corruption to occur”.

And so, it begins, “flight crew” and “team members” are recruited into fancy titled management roles and given high levels of discretion in their decision-making. They soon discover that their ineptitude is rewarded as long as they toe the line fed to them by the higher ups. Not only that the higher ups say that they will support all their inept decisions and they do! This is a win – win, the consequence of their ineptitude is reward! As long as they mouth the “business mantra” Happy days!

Pretty soon they discover that they can get away with pretty much anything, like intimidation and bullying, misrepresentation and coercion, maybe even timesheet fraud! Because after all, they're running a business, right! You wouldn't expect business owners to be tied to a clock or a Kronos device! That's for the plebs on the front line not for "the management team".

Hmmm, timesheet fraud! Did someone say "timesheet fraud"? Now we all know that one will get ya! And we all know there's no honor amongst thieves!

Out comes a whistleblower! Usually, one of the in crowd someone they think they can trust, or at least don't need to be too careful around, until that long awaited and promised promotion goes to the wrong person and then boom! - ICAC. But despite all the pretense of running a business, it's still one government department talking to another. And at the higher levels they tip each other off.

Time for damage control!

A couple of managers get put on BS plans, quietly of course. One even gets promoted and yet another gets "an unexpected opportunity" at Transport, which just coincidentally happens to be for 6 months. (6-month "regression" to a better job – now that's punishment) A classic move in government damage control.

But despite the facade, they know that you can't really keep things secret and talk of managers committing fraud and not being sacked for it would spread like wild fire. Not to mention the dent it would put into the façade that covers up the whole secretive, authoritarian mess with many communication and technology problems. The cavalier culture, the broken systems and poor management. A management style and culture that is secretive, authoritarian, silo-based and non-consultative. And of course, they reject any feedback they don't like as negative comment!

That's a recipe for disaster!

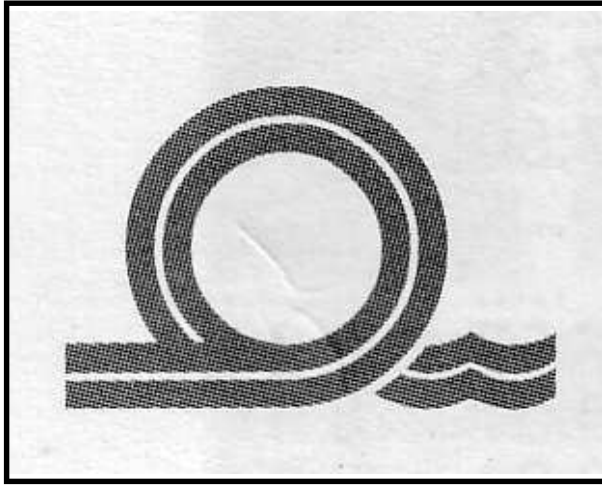
And as the old saying goes – never let a good crisis go to waste.

So, they deflect attention away from management wrong doing and coverup by scapegoating frontline employees for tapping off 4 min early. And they claim good governance as a pretense for doing so!

Focus is now deflected away from management wrongdoing and coverup and they continue with their attack on workplace rights, pay and conditions, with greater invigoration, because now they have the conviction of and ICAC investigation to back them up! Never mind that the investigation was targeted at management.



Oh, and the "minor technicality" of a 4 min "paper" saving across a few thousand employees will go a long way towards padding someone's resume!



*“If we’re going to keep this quiet, we’ll need a public enquiry.”*

## **“The Secret State”**

**On the morning of Monday 5th February 2019, members of the NSW “Secret Corporate Society” including CEO’s of Transport for NSW, the STA, Sydney and NSW Trains, the union executive, together with all NSW Govt. Ministers and the CEO’s of all the big banks, corporations, NSW Clubs, Hotels and Gambling Associations and representatives from the corporate media, received a personal email from Gladys Berejiklian NSW Govt. Premier. In coded language the Premier demanded they attend an urgent meeting to help repair damage to the Liberals public image for their campaign in the upcoming NSW elections in March. It was to be held in the TfNSW head office at 10 am sharp on Monday 12th February.**

When the assorted CEO’s, politicians and big bosses turned up at the TfNSW offices to attend the meeting in the conference room, they had quite a shock. They were confronted by a menacing gauntlet of Public Order and Riot Squad cops and ASIO officers. Such was the paranoia of Gladys with regard to any leaks about the meeting, that all of the bosses’ and polties’ mobile phones were confiscated and scanners were directed at their belongings. They were then herded into a side room where strip searches were conducted with Gladys glimpsed menacingly waving a whip, before they could finally enter the conference room and take their seats. Through one of our moles in ASIO who infiltrated the spook team involved in the operation, we can provide a detailed report of the proceedings. As part of his assignment, the mole had been regularly monitoring Gladys emails. He was scandalised to see a racy selfie of Gladys attired in a dollar sign emblazoned negligee sent to the union executive of all people who “always obey the law of the land”!!! and the AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) high up bosses with a note congratulating them on the slick rigging of the 2018 union elections.

The meeting commenced with Gladys striding confidently to the rostrum accompanied by her “neo-liberal muse” Transport Minister Constance. Her speech went along the familiar lines



that when she became the NSW Premier she had promised her audience riches, astronomical salaries, massive bonuses, high profits and that she had delivered lavishly. Her Government had relaxed building laws to supercharge real estate developments and imposed wages caps in the public sector to lower workers' standards of living and allowed astronomical rent and utility cost spirals. Now, certain embarrassing cracks had recently appeared in her governmental masterwork. All her audience's bounty and rorts were under threat. She then "darkly" referred to the downfall of a certain Cardinal Pell, a loyal retainer of the corporate elite and the Liberals who had been tangled up in a hyped up scandal over a trifling indiscretion and will take a trip to the never world. She then emphasised ominously, many of them could follow suit! ASIO which had been closely "protecting" them from marauding ISIS death squads on her explicit instructions, had by pure chance acquired footage of their wild orgies at certain establishments in the suburbs of Surry Hills and Kings Cross, which she had viewed until the wee hours after each day's strenuous parliamentary duties and even on the weekends and holidays with extreme disgust and was horrified!!! She quipped Cardinal Pell will get a 7 page spread in the Tele for his escapades. You lot could get 8 pages! If members of the corporate "secret society" didn't urgently knuckle under and help her patch things up!

She then continued that the "Opal Tower" fiasco was threatening to expose our friends amongst real estate developers and the construction industry bosses to undue public scrutiny and jeopardising major corporate donations to our election campaign. Whilst inflaming voter hostility to her government. The WestConnex construction was also contributing to major voter backlash stemming from growing community uproar over damage to neighbouring housing as a result of cracks and Asbestos and other dangerous pollution. Whilst the mass fish kill on the inland rivers was not a picturesque look. Finally, she whinged about the trouble she is having with the Allianz Stadium rebuilding fiasco and associated community uproar. She then presented a way forward. She emphasised that we need to put a positive spin on these minor blotches on our record and present them as tourist attractions and draw cards for foreign investors to make "NSW The State of Business!" She then proceeded to hold a round table "brain storming" session.

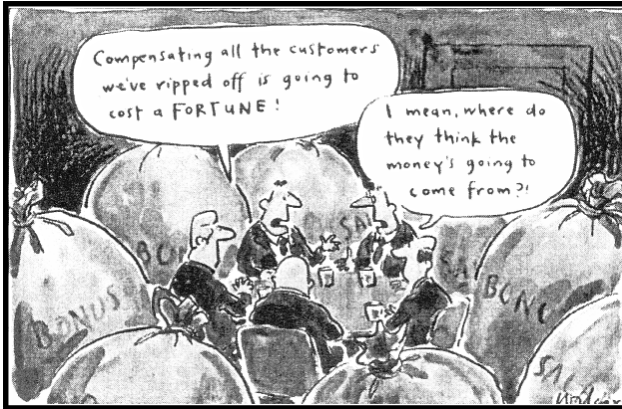
Following a buzz of conversation, conspiratorial sniggering and loud bursts of laughter from the big bosses and pollies, Gladys opened the round table discussion. Clint "The Fuehrer" of Transit Systems, jumped up from his seat, clicked his jack boot heels and smartly piped up with a most creative suggestion for the fish kill issue. "Look, in my organisation, we go out of our way to advertise our safety priority, even mention it on our drivers' vests. We have been very successful in covering up the high number of accidents affecting new drivers in Region 6, which Fraulein Gladys, your Government kindly slipped into our pocket. We did of course have the help of the corporate media and the union executive with some "smoke and mirrors", to fool drivers and the community. The corporate media outlets could present the whole thing as the result of fringe cowboy elements, but having the silver lining of providing a "final solution" to the carp infestation problem. So helping make NSW State of Business beautiful!"

Howard Collins, CEO of Sydney Trains, then chirped up with a suggested "feel good" cover-up for the Opal Tower fallout. "In my organisation, I've achieved wonders in driving off the job the old time staff by requiring them to stand throughout their shifts on platforms

and imposing compulsory overtime and unrealistic timetables on drivers causing considerable fatigue. I've successfully used the flimsy pretexts of "customer expectations" and driver shortages. We could publicise the whole fiasco as a result of a rogue construction firm, and easily remedied. Currently the Opal maybe cracking and its glitter fading, and many residents are too frightened to return. However, all will be good in the end. How about the Opal scenario for a remake of that old British TV series "Fawlty Towers"? Providing the "happy ending" of a "cracking" good comedy of errors with plenty of chuckles about the residents predicament, red tape entanglement, bureaucratic run-arounds and buck passing to boost our Film and TV industry to power drive "NSW The State of Business!" Suddenly Stephen Chapman President of the NSW Master Builders Association interrupted, red faced and yelling, "Führerin Gladys, I don't find this idea at all funny and don't blame "Icon" a respected member of our association! Why can't we just blame the building workers?" Gladys then chimed in, "You're a genius! That's a wonderful idea!"

The brain storming was warming up, and now CEO Stefan Furball perched precariously on the "rump" of State Transit, joined in. He began with the now standard self aggrandising spiel. Along the lines that he had successfully been hacking away at older drivers' wages and driving many off the job with the full cooperation and silence of the union executive and media outlets. He praised the efforts

of his management team and in particular the whip cracking and general devilish disciplinary skills of a certain "Madam Lash" in achieving splendid results. It was later revealed via a leak to the disquiet of the audience that the "Madam" had also been moonlighting as a glamorous ASIO spy, based on some on-the-job experience, equipped with hi-tech surveillance equipment at certain Surry Hills and Kings Cross specialist VIP "bondage establishments".



Gladys was delighted with the news, and suddenly perked up, "Stefan, there'll be room at the top for you and I blow a big sloppy kiss to the "Madam"! Furball was beaming with the praise and adulation. Clicked his jackboot heels and saluted. He then presented his great ideas to cover up the WestConnex and ALLIANZ Stadium fallout. "In regard to the freeway could we get our media friends to blame the local residents as over sensitive trouble makers, standing in the way of progress? Whilst with the Stadium, they could just peddle the story that the massive wasteful infrastructure expenditure was all about improving safety features and certainly not a rort to fill the coffers of the concrete and construction sector?"

Gladys, then intervened in the "roundtable", raising the issue of the rising uproar in certain quarters of the electorate concerning the undue influence, soaring profits and harmful impact of the Clubs and Gambling industries in NSW. She enquired, "What are you grog and gam-

bling people proposing to tackle it?” Clubs NSW Chairman Peter Newell, perked up and provided a suggestion. “Fuhrerin Gladys, it’s obvious, our media outlets and the NSW Tourism Department, could present NSW as the Las Vegas of the South Pacific. Whilst as part of the publicity we can offer alcoholic gamblers cut price private hospital liver transplants subsidised by the public spirited NSW Govt.”

Following the end of the conference, our mole deposited in a camouflaged “dead letter box” near ASIO HQ, a copy of the above report. We found there were no secrets. However, from reading the content of the report we can only draw the conclusion that there is a great lack of trust by the corporate elite and the government in workers. Whilst, Gladys still got back in power. She is likely to go ahead with more privatisation. As a result our mole missed a lucrative performance bonus and the opportunity for a promotion in our “organisation”. New glamorous assignments providing entry into the world of fast cars, beautiful women and gambling at Monte Carlo, whilst spying on the corporate elite at international forums and conferences. As part of ASIO security teams for the Australian delegations. Crestfallen he had to continue his hum drum work in NSW.

## Sydney Buses News

### Leichhardt Depot News

#### **Sparks: What were your impressions of the wildcat strike “mass sickie” at the depot in early December?**

Leichhardt Driver1: 74 drivers were involved in the action. On the next day all drivers who took sickies were taken to the Fair Work Australia Court. Those who were regarded as taking “illegal” industrial action had their “industrial allowance” removed. Whilst some of those who had medical certificates, but regarded as taking illegal industrial action weren’t paid for the sickie. The “industrial allowance” was reinstated after a month or so.

#### **Sparks: What is the latest at the depot?**

Leichhardt Driver2: The most important news has been a wildcat strike at Leichhardt on a Monday in early Dec. It involved mass sickies and was over all issues, rather than one specific one. It was treated by management as industrial action. Next day the drivers taking sickies were taken to the Fair Work Australia Court where those considered taking “illegal” industrial action temporarily lost their industrial allowance.

The December roster/timetable changes had led to a major tightening of running times. With many runs lacking any layover breaks, due to the unrealistic running times imposed. We had to complete our journals on the road, with the loss of the layover break. Latest news is that these running times will be reviewed in March. We still have not heard of the decision of the industrial commission regarding the dispute over coverage of Region 6 between the RTBU and the TWU. (See Burwood Depot News.) However, 70% of new drivers at Leichhardt are joining the RTBU.

**Sparks: How have you finding the situation at the depot since privatisation?**

Leichhardt Driver2: The talk by Transit Systems that there would be no changes for 18 months has proven to be just propaganda. Since day one there have been changes. When the depot had a shortage of drivers some months ago, and most running times were completely unrealistic, with drivers running late for their meal breaks, the bosses replaced the 30 minutes meal breaks with 20 minutes “crib breaks”. Whilst DOC’s were common. Whilst the time drivers were taking increased sickies or threatening to in early Dec. may very well have precipitated management to revamp some bus running times in the drivers favour and put on more drivers.

As of late March, the situation has changed as we now have a surplus of drivers, with plenty of spares. Now the bosses have engaged in a new savage attack. They have been phasing putting most AM shift drivers onto day shifts which are mostly broken with 12 hours spreads. As a result these drivers are having their daily shifts spread over longer hours. They are stuck at work for longer hours with more layup time between shift halves. Upstairs at Leichhardt in the lounge you can see a lot of drivers who live out West and are on these broken shifts, snoozing off.



Other news is that there is a big push by management to have new drivers join the TWU. They are putting the hard word on them. However, everyone knows how hopeless the TWU officials are in servicing their members in Transit Systems. Whilst the TWU Enterprise Agreement conditions are worse than the RTBU EBA such as their broken shifts having 12 ½ hours spreads.

**Burwood Depot News**

**Sparks: What are you impressions of the wildcat strike “mass sickie” at Leichhardt in early Dec.?**

Burwood Driver1: We have received contradictory information about the number of drivers involved in the action. The highest estimate made is 70 to 80. There was no wildcat action at Burwood. Latest news is that the drivers involved in the action including those taking sickies not involved, were taken the day after the wildcat to the Fair Work Australia Court for taking alleged “illegal” industrial action. Even one Burwood driver who took a sickie on that day was hauled into the Court. However he was able to prove his sickie was taken on legitimate grounds and got off the hook. The newly elected union officials are keeping us in the dark over the whole affair and its ramifications. We do receive texts from our union rep 3-4 times a

week. However, he doesn't seem to be on the same wavelength as the union officials and even he appears to be kept in the dark on developments and issues.

**Sparks: How are you finding the situation since privatisation?**

BD1: Our situation has been going down and down. We have had an estimated 4% cut in our pay since privatisation. However, the union officials claim we will get this money back. This reduction in pay has been achieved by the bosses reducing our shifts and the bosses putting on more new drivers. In the case of a Kingsgrove driver, his shift was supposed to be 7 hours. Now it has been reduced to 5 hours 55 minutes. The new drivers are being put on AM's, PM's and Bendies and as they don't get the 15% allowances on these shifts, the bosses can cut costs.

**Sparks: What are the latest developments with the court case between the TWU and RTBU over coverage of Region 6 drivers?**

BD1: The judge has made his decision. He ruled that "let the market decide". At Burwood no new drivers are joining the TWU. There is only one TWU member at the depot and he had been previously a truckie where he joined the TWU.

**Sparks: What are the latest developments with management?**

BD1: Behind the scenes management has been busily hatching a new plot. They consider we are now over staffed in Region 6 so they intend to launch a "discipline crack down". So as to create pretexts for culling drivers on the basis that they are not performing enough.

**Sparks: How are you finding the situation since the Dec. Timetable changes?**

Burwood Driver2: Following the changes we were facing a significant tightening of running times on routes. The bosses were continually tightening the schedules so it's ever harder to meet them. Particularly hard hit were the running times on the weekends. In regard to the 461 you had only 5 minutes to get from the depot to the start on the run. We have also noticed a big increase in accidents affecting the new drivers often one and two a day.

**Sparks: How are finding the job since privatisation?**

Burwood Driver3: One thing I have noticed is the major decline in the mechanical section staffing. The other day, whilst on the road I needed a change over as a result of a damaged mirror. I had to wait 3 hours for the changeover. Under the STA, in the old days mechanics would be sent rapidly to do the repair on the road.

**Waverley Depot News**

**Sparks: What's the latest at the depot?**

Waverley Busie: The most significant development is the major cuts in pay many drivers are facing. Until recently, you could earn a very good income. That's all gone now. Today most just earn an ordinary wage. A major factor contributing to this situation is favouritism by Transport for NSW toward Transit Systems. They are now getting the longer runs and consequently more lucrative routes. As they are paid by TfNSW per kilometre of runs, and they already pay low taxes on their gross income. Whilst we are just getting mostly the shorter runs. As a result of the loss in pay many drivers are unable to cope with high Sydney rents, mortgage repayments and massive power bills, causing disillusionment with the job and a high turnover of drivers, with the STA unable to keep drivers. We could have tackled this pay re-

duction problem some years back when the lightning strike occurred over the Region 6 privatisation, all depots should have taken wildcat industrial action and pushed for an increase in our hourly pay from \$28 to \$38 per hour.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the effects of route changes affecting the STA eastern depots and Transit Systems?**

WB: With the tramways construction, and no buses going to Circular Quay anymore, Waverley buses such as the 30 route buses are now not entering the CBD, but converging in Zetland, Alexandria and Redfern. Whilst the 333 and 380 still go into the CBD. These suburbs are now awash with buses. At peak hour every street seems to be packed with buses, left, right and centre from the STA eastern depots and the private company, contributing to major traffic congestion in the area. They are using every space they can find. Recently I have noticed 4 buses including a bendi parked in a row in one of these small back streets. Whilst I was recently speaking to a coffee shop owner in Zetland, who commented on how he had never seen buses including bendies parking there. In regard to the depot, bus turnaround times on many of our routes are a lot less generous than existed in the past. I don't think schedulers know the full story of the difficulties drivers have in doing their runs.

**Sparks: What is the latest with privatisation?**

WB: In late January 4 to 5 representatives from Transit Systems were seen "sniffing" around the depot. In particular they were noticed eyeing off the depot administration building. Is it likely the NSW Govt. will give the green light to build high rise apartments at the front and in the air space above the northern end of the depot? A similar development occurred at Nth Sydney depot in the past. A major obstacle to such a development at Waverley would be the big campaign being currently waged by locals against high rises and associated traffic congestion in the area. Whilst intriguingly a small but very significant change has been made to the account details on Transit Systems Region 6 buses. Now "West" in brackets has been added to Transit Systems. Does this mean the Eastern suburbs depots is next in their sights?

**Sparks: What is the situation with data collecting on drivers?**

WB: The bosses are disregarding the issues of whether drivers are safe and are they doing their job. Instead with the data they are now collecting, they are focusing on such issues as whether drivers are leaving on time. This data can seriously misrepresent whether drivers are doing their jobs. This playing around with data on this and that about workers which happens in many companies and Govt. Departments can be used to make up things against you and so target you for the sack.



*"What a day! Caught between a Wiki leak and a document dump."*

**Sparks: How is “Madam Lash” doing these days?**

WB: She hasn’t been taking her medication. She has upset the upper crust and has been hauled through the coals for disregarding a commuter complaint. She just wants to run her own race and stay in her office waving the whip at drivers and getting rid of them. She already has a bad reputation for her past spying on drivers. She is not engaging and causes hassles. The previous boss was known to be engaging with workers. Why is the STA keeping this type of person as the boss?

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the incident involving a Kingsgrove Driver causing an accident resulting in two fatalities through his usage of his mobile phone on the road?**

WB: Have the standards for drivers education and training dropped since the private company takeover of Region 6? As a result of the shortage of drivers which affected the company, the bosses were desperate to take on new drivers and appear to be turning a blind eye on issues such as drivers’ mobile use while on the road, which has been a big issue for ten years. Under the STA, the bosses were very strict on this issue. They even required drivers at terminuses to stand outside their buses or sit sideways in their buses when using mobiles to avoid targeting by the corporate media by being photographed and set up for some hostile story. I recently spoke with a Tempe driver who expressed disappointment with the new outfit’s management style. He complained they have been “importing” drivers from all over the place. Their major concern has been to save money on training and turning a blind eye on such issues as mobile phone usage and contributing to a degrading of the job.

**Sparks: What are the latest developments with the Light Rail in the Eastern Suburbs?**

WB: Berejiklian’s Rolls Royce white elephant will cost \$3 Billion and has ruined many businesses and jobs in the area. Already the budget has blown out three times. It will take over a hundred years to get the money back. It’s likely this expenditure will never be recovered. Those most benefiting from the project would be the racing and gambling industries associated with Randwick Racecourse, and South’s Juniors Leagues Club. Whilst when the Light Rail is fully operational next year, people will see a lot more traffic congestion in the East. Particularly Alison Road will be affected with 2 crossings and Anzac Parade with three crossings and generally slowing the flow of traffic on the major roads. A significant problem affecting the extension outside the Prince of Wales hospital, is that the extension work will disrupt entry to the Casualty Section for ambulances. When the state elections were coming up, Gladys was having a “tidying up” and fast tracking of the extension work with barriers removed and bitumen laid on the roadway. Still seems the extensions won’t be completed for another year. Then look out for your jobs.

**Sparks: How are you finding the situation since the privatisation of Region 6?**

Waverley Driver1: One thing I have noticed is that the bosses are now cancelling a lot of runs. Before privatisation, they would always try to find replacement buses. This is further hurting commuters.

**Santa Comes Late to Waverley Drivers**

**Sparks: What is the latest with management?**

Waverley Driver2: As a personal initiative of the manager, she has given us an unwelcome “Post Xmas Present”. It’s a 5 point rating system affecting all drivers, both those with 6 months or less on the job and those with many years. The points include on-time-running, number of sickies, discipline breaches, accidents and commuter complaints. On the basis of this system, qualification for better shifts and other rewards such as bendi shifts which are more highly paid than normal driving shifts are determined. Whenever drivers are dragged into the office, the manager refers to whether they are higher or lower in this rating. It is being used to discriminate against the older drivers. In the past you needed to be on the job for 8 years or so to get on the bendi shift. Now new drivers with less than 6 months on the job are getting this work. As obviously they haven’t had time on the job to accumulate many black marks and negatively affect their rating. Whilst, older drivers are particularly being targeted by the ‘Kellies’ for on the road inspections. It all seems to be aimed at driving the older drivers off the job.

**Sparks: What are your impressions of the union at the depot?**

WD2: The woman who was elected as our union rep, prior to the union election was very loud mouthed on issues. Since being elected she has quietened down. In late Feb. two drivers were sacked. She did nothing over it. Rather than confronting the burning seniority and sackings issues, she just refers to other less important ones. There is a consensus amongst many of us that if the Libs are re-elected in the March elections, the depot will be sold off. So many are supporting the ALP in the elections.

**Kingsgrove Depot News**

**Sparks: How are you finding the situation since privatisation?**

Kingsgrove Driver: All the new guys are jointing the TWU, rather than the RTBU. They are all coming under various subtle pressures from management to join the TWU. As a result, they are under worse wages than us. As under the TWU enterprise agreement their rate of normal wages is lower as well as their penalty rates, than with the RTBU. It’s looking with the next EBA are wages/penalties will go down toward TWU standards. Whilst eventually, it’s looking we will be all under the TWU conditions regime.

## VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In this issue of Sparks we will conduct a roundup of events at V/Line over the last twelve months. Once again Head Office staff, station staff, Conductors and Drivers come together to discuss these events. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.*

**Sparks: We will start with the first issue, PRIVATISATION. What is the current situation?**

Sheona: A couple of months ago State Treasury sent a firm of accountants in to do an audit of V/Line.



Clarence: This Audit was carried out to prepare V/Line for Privatisation, but because the ALP was returned with an increased majority at the last State election, the report has been pigeon-holed.

Rastus: The report may be pigeonholed, but eventually the Liberals will be returned and this report will once again surface.

Emily: It may surface, but the Victorian Public will not wear it. The only reason V/Line was not privatised during the term of the previous Liberal State Government was that they only had a one seat majority in Government and the National Party would not have it.

Abner: With V/Line adventures over the last four years it is a wonder the Liberal Party do not say anything during the campaign.

**Sparks: We will now discuss the issues of Dismissals.**

Abner: This is still an ongoing issue. Employees on PROBATION are the ones being dismissed. At Spencer Street, the Acting Manager dismissed an employee with only a couple of days to go before their probation expired. The employee was called into the Acting Manager's office and told their work during their probation was unsatisfactory. The employee wanted a Union Delegate to be present. The Acting Manager said, "get into the office" and was terminated.

Clarence: The employee told the Acting Manager that the matter is not over and it will be heading to Fair Work. The case may be lost, but it may prevent future dismissals.

Jethro: The problem with the Customer Service Staff is no one will take on the Union Delegate's position. If employees are in trouble then a Union Organiser is brought in. Lacking this, the Conductors' Delegate or Drivers' Delegate have been known to defend these employees.

**Sparks: What about the Booking Clerk who was sacked?**

Sheona: This case was heard by Fair Work over three days and a fair amount of V/Line practices were exposed. As this issue of Sparks was being prepared, no decision has been handed down.

Emily: As a result of the case another employee has been stood down.

**Sparks: Why?**

Jehtro: The employee put in for a Day's Leave to attend the hearing of the Dismissed Booking Clerk at Fair Work and give him some support. The application for leave was rejected.

Roscoe: It was obvious the application was knocked back as V/Line did not want the sacked employee being supported.

Elrond: The employee turned up at the hearing at Fair Work was noticed by V/Line management and as a result was stood down. As this issue of Sparks was being prepared the employee is still stood down.

Arlene: V/Line are now standing down employees on minor issues such as passenger complaints.

Rastus and Roscoe: The reason these employees are stood down is to keep someone in Human Resources in a job. They don't care about the stress employees are placed under.

Olwyn: We conductors put up with a lot from the public on the trains and CSM's are doing what management tells them. They do not have the guts to stand up to Human Resources.

Rastus and Roscoe: You know what drivers think about CSM's and as we have said in a previous issue of Sparks. If you are stood down come into work and discuss the issue about why you have been stood down with your fellow employees. Also hold on the job meetings on the station concourse. V/line cannot stop a Union Meeting being held on the platform at Spencer Street.

**Sparks: What is the story about managers selling redundant assets?**

Oswald: Some managers were caught selling these assets.

**Sparks: What are the assets?**

Abner: Redundant furniture and other fittings.

Olywn: What makes the employees upset is these managers make money out of flogging off the assets while they are giving employees final warnings and dismissals over minor issues.

Clarence: An employee was stood down years ago for selling redundant assets but he was able to talk his way out of allegations and is still on the job.

Jethro: Not being a member of a union may have helped. You see V/Line looks after non-unionists.

Clarence: They have stood down an employee for being ten minutes late because they signed on at the current time. V/Line said the employee was defrauding V/Line.



Abner: They many have done the wrong thing and you were once allowed grace of ten minutes if your train to work was late but what this employee has committed is minor compared to what these managers have done. They have committed THEFT.

Oswald: The thefts are gossip around V/Line. You can hear staff discussing the matter in meal rooms.

Rastus and Roscoe: Even the drivers are talking about the matter in the meal rooms.

**Sparks: What about the matter of the letters sent to V/Line employees for being late to work?**

Jethro: The matter was taken to Fair Work Australia and V/Line has been told to delete these letters from the employees records.

Clarence: In previous issues we have stated that the majority of the persons were late by under fifteen minutes. The trains were not delayed so why was V/Line picking on these employees?

Rastus and Roscoe: The reason V/Line picked on these employees was payback for the employees throwing out V/Line's proposal to modify the EBA. This matter was discussed in issue 159.

**Sparks: What is the situation as regards the Talent Pool.**

Rastus: There is now a Talent Pool for the drivers and existing V/Line staff and external recruits are placed in the pool. After twelve months if you are still in the pool, you have to reapply.

Roscoe: There is a story going around on social media about an applicant who applied for a conductor's position and was successful in his interview. He was placed in the Talent Pool.

Abner: You are in the Talent Pool and you hope you will get a phone call within twelve months saying you are in the next conductor class.

Oswald: V/Line has the habit of contacting people and saying the class will start next week.

Sheona: Human Resources does not show any common sense. They should give an external applicant at least two week's notice so they can give their existing employer two week's notice.

Roscoe: If you give notice that before two weeks you could lose your entitlements.

Abner: This applicant was contacted by someone at V/Line and told they were in the next conductor class.

**Sparks: What happened.**

Abner: The applicant resigned his current job and waited to start in the conductor class.

Sheona: The applicant waited and after a few weeks rang V/Line enquiring when he was to commence the class. A few weeks later, the applicant was informed he was not successful.

Rastus: We do not know how the applicant felt, but one of the drivers informed myself that one of the Chief Executives at V/Line was sent an email expressing disappointment in not obtaining the conductor's position.

Sheona: It has been rumoured that v/Line has sent the person a letter apologising for what has happened, but did not offer the applicant a position at V/line.

Roscoe: The applicant would have been devastated. They would now have to look for another job and because of the email sent to the Chief Executive would be on a blacklist.

Emily: You can see why V/line employees and the Union hate these Talent Pools. What has been exposed in previous Sparks have shown Talent Pools for what they are A FRAUD.

**Sparks: Once again we have run out of space. Thank you to everyone who has contributed in this issue. We hope the Booking Clerk who was sacked is reinstated. As for the applicant who was given false hopes of obtaining a conductor's position, V/Line give this applicant a position.**

Rastus and Roscoe: Once again in having the final say, these managers who were flogging off redundant assets should be terminated and the matter referred to IBAC. As for the applicant

who was cheated out of the conductor's position, V/Line should give this person a position in V/Line when a vacancy occurs. Think of the stress this person has gone through. As for the person who told the applicant that he was in the next conductors' class, you should be held accountable for your actions. Unfortunately you will keep your position. Enough said.

### **STOP PRESS**

As this issue goes to press, Fair Work Australia has handed down a decision in favour of V/Line. The sacking of the booking clerk will stand. One hour after the decision was handed down. The other booking clerk who was stood down was sacked. More details next issue.

***Ten ways in which Andrew Constance is physically destroying Sydney and NSW's rail and bus public transport infrastructure. (From) An open letter to the Rail Division of the RTBU, from a collective of bus driver members of the same union, calling for a combined industrial action by train workers and bus drivers, to demand the sacking of Transport Minister Constance. Continued From Last Edition***

If you think the unpardonable compromising of all of this slow capital investment that took 160 years to create a public rail transport system that's now rendered redundant by the removal of its spinal, seaport city terminal regional rail link, if you think that this is now just a regrettable crime that's contained and confined to the recent past, (ie,- "what's done, is done"!), and now that we've realised that, we couldn't possibly be so stupid as to allow something as insane as this to occur again,- think again!

Know this: An exact copy of this publicly irresponsible, investment-squandering, vandalistic Ministerial behaviour, is currently being forged and gotten ready for the private laundering of the chief public asset of the entire NSW rail infrastructure's inventory, here in sea-port Sydney town.

The amputation and destruction of the Newcastle City's Hunter River seaport railway and station terminal, is just a small-scale rehearsal for something else Transport Minister Constance can't make happen fast enough before he and his cronies are thrown out of office:

The dismembering of Sydney Railway Station's working regional and interstate rail terminus function at Central, its relocation to an improvised and unremarkable fixture a few miles out of town, and the sale of all that publicly-owned real estate between there and south of Redfern currently dedicated for the arrival and despatch of interstate and regional train services throughout NSW, is high on this maverick privatiser's tragically derelict mind. Turn to public rail infrastructure destruction site Number 8 if you're in a hurry.

### **NINE OTHER EXISTING SITES, WHERE CONSTANCE'S AGENDA OF DECONSTRUCTING SYDNEY'S PUBLIC RAIL & BUS NETWORK, IS BRAZENLY APPARENT.**

By masquerading his roll-call of "Poles & Wires" funded initiatives with project tags and mantras like "Metro", "Parramatta Light Rail", "South East Light Rail", and "Tomorrow's

Sydney”, and advising us all to happily ”Embrace Disruption”, Constance effectively hides from public view and discourse, an agenda that is disposing of and/or destroying, seven suburban public rail lines in Sydney, as well as one vital and integral rail public transport asset the importance of which is common to both the State’s and the Country’s inter-urban and regional rail network. At stake are the whole nation’s public rail connections. Check out his rampage:-

#### **PUBLIC RAILWAY DECONSTRUCTION SITE No 2.....**

The dismembering of the Sydenham to Bankstown rail line. This fait-accompli disposal of a public rail infrastructure asset, also disposes of Railway destruction site No 3, the Regents Park to Bankstown line, in the process!

The Bankstown Line between Sydenham and Belmore opened on 1 February 1895. Its extension to Bankstown from “Burwood Road”,- (the original name for the Belmore platform), came much later, in 1909. The line was electrified in 1926, and extended to the main south line at Regents Park via new stations at Yagoona and Birrong in July 1928.

By this simple 3 or 4 kilometre extension, the suburban branch line became a trunk loop route that enabled the re-circuiting of trains to and from the City Circle via either the Sydenham direction, or the Lidcombe and Strathfield “main suburban” line direction.

The junction at Regent’s Park also made public rail travel to many other suburbs of Sydney from suburbs along the Bankstown line, a realistic prospect, with just a change of train or two now required for services as far afield as Liverpool and Campbelltown, Parramatta, Penrith, or Richmond – Windsor, and even shopping destinations not so far away like Burwood and Ashfield, where a change of train wasn’t even necessary. The Sydenham to Bankstown and Lidcombe loop system as it presently operates, is still a capable and efficient one. More than just a single line completed in 1909,- the long work in continual progress is the evolved legacy of several following eras of steady and prudent investment in lobbying for appropriate steps forward and improvements to the system and its services, as the relevant technologies become apparent and applicable. An evolving bunch of sequential improvements over time, provides a baseline infrastructure with a diversity of measurable gains and outcomes.

These milestones of public investment do not amount to the vast catalogue of expenditures inherent in the Newcastle region’s rail network’s advance over 160 years of evolution, but just the few mentions made here over the space of some 35 years of progress, would amount to accomplishments worth many billions of dollars of equivalent public expenditure and investment were they needed to be built today.

Even in those days, the outgoing of whatever numbers of hundreds and thousands of pounds that were necessary to create this infrastructure and innovate on it as the years went by with extensions and connections to other services, represented the productive use of similarly vast amounts of tax payers dollars that we are routinely told today we either don’t have, or urgently need to provide for, to complete this vital transport project here, or that piece of must-have public infrastructure there.

The conversion of the Bankstown line into a system that becomes an isolatable part of a new rail technology called the Metro, will require these systemic advances and advantages hard-won over 123 years and five generations of public benefit, to be wound back and started

all over again. Retrofitting up or down to whatever new baselines are required for the Sydenham to Bankstown line to be hijacked by the Metro system, (“Metro-fitting” as the Minister’s buzzword for a down-grade goes) will be a retrograde step that takes away many of the sequential gains that have come from 123 years of improvements.

For example, commuters and other users of the service, will automatically lose their ability to make complete public rail train journeys to all the suburbs and destinations already mentioned above. Such trips will no longer be possible without changing back to the alternate, present-day public CityRail system, at either Bankstown, Sydenham, or Redfern–Central. Even City Circle CBD destinations will suddenly require a change of trains at Central to effect. Thus for long-time users of the Bankstown line, Metro conversion as an “improvement”, ransacks gains already made by 123 years of steady, sequential public investments, and wastes away not only these previous costs met by the public purse, but also the benefits purchased that are still being enjoyed today.

The totalised public investments of previous generations of taxpayers in past infrastructure projects that contemporary generations of politicians see fit to trash, have a requisite place in the accounts-received side of any valuation process that merits gaining an understanding of what we stand to lose (ie,- will be required to pay as a legitimate extra cost out-going), in the event of someone’s frenzied proposal that we suddenly abandon a lot of things, and begin doing something we’re already doing satisfactorily in an entirely different way.

Think of what’s missing here as an inter-generational Fiscal Impact Statement:- it should be the mandatory stuff of any business case presentation for a public’s discussion and decision-making about projects decreed to be in the public interest, just as social and environmental impact statements should be. Like a cerebral brain-bleed, the team called Gladys & Constance have devoutly lost this particular plot about our legislative democracy.

*Continued Next Edition*

## **GERMANY: BERLIN PUBLIC TRANSPORT STRIKE**

**Feb. 16th 2019** The BVG said traffic on the tube, tram and bus routes was starting again but until all the lines were back to normal, disruption could be expected over the next hours.

**On Friday morning, buses and trams remained in depots, while many U-Bahn gates stayed locked, as travellers were forced to find other means of transport to get to work or travel through the city.**

Over the course of the morning there was also a huge demonstration by BVG employees and union members in the centre of Berlin.

The strike started at 3:30 am. It was being held over a dispute regarding pay and conditions, and was the workers’ first strike since 2012 when they walked out on a Saturday for 15 hours.

“The strike is going according to plan”, a spokesman for the union Verdi said on Friday morning, reported DPA.

The union has also not ruled out the possibility of further strikes.

Many people with early morning flights faced huge disruption getting to the airport. Along with the U-Bahn services, the bus lines TXL, X9, 128 and 109 to Tegel airport were not due to be in operation until noon. Passengers travelling to and from Schönefeld were advised to switch to the S-Bahn or regional trains.

However, shortly after 9 am, Berlin airport services (BER) organized a shuttle bus to take passengers to Tegel from the Jungfernheide S and U-Bahn station.

The S-Bahn system, which is operated by Deutsche Bahn, was not affected directly by the strike. Many people switched to S-Bahn trains to get to their destination.

S-Bahn services and regional trains were over-crowded as people flocked to them during the strike.

The Berliner Zeitung reported that the S1 (Zehlendorf-Potsdamer Platz) and the S5 (Mahlsdorf-Warschauer Straße) was planning a total of around 50 additional journeys, which may have eased some of the congestion.

Many people got on their bikes to travel across the city in the morning. Luckily, the sun was out.

The strike also resulted in lots of people switching to their cars. This meant traffic was particularly heavy, especially during rush hour.

The red parts in this graphic by the Tagesspiegel show where the worst traffic jams were this morning.

Other people walked to work, with some leaving earlier than usual.

Some people commented on how quiet areas of the city were on Friday since they were usually filled with trams. This is Alexanderplatz.

A total of 28 subcontracted bus lines and all ferries were excluded from industrial action because subcontractors are not on strike.

Some BVG employees picketed at different locations throughout the city during the strike. Here, an employee wears a bib with the line: 'We are worth it' on it, early on Friday morning. Photo: DPA.

Berlin and Brandenburg broadcaster RBB posted a video on Twitter of the huge number of employees protesting at the BVG headquarters.

Many people urged Berliners to show their solidarity with the strikers with the hashtag #Solidarität.

This tweet shows a picture of graffiti on an U-Bahn train. It says: 'Dear BVG employees, we wish you lots of success in the collective bargaining negotiations, higher wages and shorter working hours.'

What's the strike about?

Verdi demands that the weekly working time for employees who joined the BVG after 2005 be reduced from 39 to 36.5 hours – with full wage compensation.

This would require 500 additional employees, said Claudia Pfeiffer, managing director of the local employers' association (KAV), earlier this week.

## 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:

- I. 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.

### **GERMAN PT STRIKE Continued From Page 23.**

The negotiations on the new collective agreement for the 14,500 employees are also about a fairer classification in the wage and salary table. The Christmas bonus of €1,400, which is only paid out after one year of being an em-

ployee, should also be paid earlier, according to the union.

The trade union has also demanded a one-off payment of €500 from the BVG for its members. The bottom line is that all the improvements demanded would increase the BVG's annual personnel costs (most recently around €570 million) by €60 million, according to Verdi.

The union has warned that more strikes could take place.

BVG bosses have described the strike as "completely inappropriate".

It's the latest in a long line of strikes to hit Germany as negotiations over pay take place. There's been industrial action by airport staff and public service workers.









# What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic