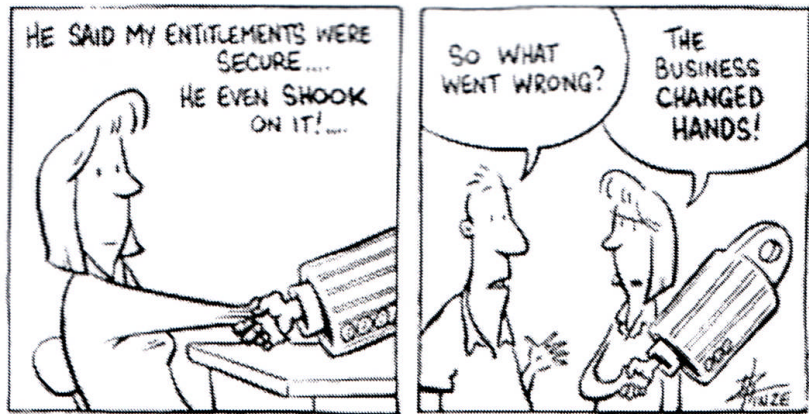


Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**ALP UNION HIERARCHY “CONSULTS AWAY”
PRIVATISATION, JOBS & CONDITIONS
LOSSES! MEMBERS’ VOICE ORGANISES
ON THE JOB TO ESTABLISH
“ANTI-PRIVATISATION” COMMITTEES TO
FIGHT BACK WITH DIRECT ACTION!**



Train Crew News;
STA Busie News;
International News;
Rail-Bus News;
Technology Vs Jobs;

NSW Railway News;
Victorian Railway News;
O'Farrell Schutzen Fest;
STA Transition Program;
STA Admin. Cuts

EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Some of the most important news lately has been the O'Farrell Government's plans for the carve up of RailCorp and major job losses as part of its privatisation agenda, rubber stamped by the notorious Booz Allen management consultants. Members' Voice has moved quickly and issued a bulletin on the issue, advocating fighting privatisation of the railways and encouraging the formation of "anti-privatisation committees" on the job to fight back. According to feedback received, it's been very well received on the job. The ALP union hierarchy typically is rolling over completely before this onslaught and is doing nothing. Certainly, stop work mass meetings to consider a campaign of direct action to fight privatisation moves and various cutbacks and a commuter education campaign are urgent priorities.

In this edition, we focus on the issue of new technology in the railways and the need for workers to campaign to take advantage of it, rather than just taking a purely negative viewpoint. (See article page 3.)

In State Transit, the grass roots are facing more savage attacks, particularly STA admin. Section workers are in the gun sight. (See Article page 15.) Whilst the STA CEO has been brazenly trying to blackmail workers with privatisation threats to gouge out more budget economies. (See article page 13.)

Whilst in recent months many on the job are working ever harder, care of the bosses' attacks, we at Sparks have also been hard at work spying on the O'Farrell Government, the bosses and of course their good chums, the union hierarchy. We have been recently supplied with the latest in surveillance equipment and techniques by our "moles" which have infiltrated ASIO and other state agencies. As a result, we have brought you coverage in this edition of a "top secret" Schutzen Fest organised by the O'Farrell Government and its business mates, involving wild antics by scantily clad bankers and CEO's!!! (See article page 10.)

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

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RailCorp Train Crew News

The latest news is that in regard to whistle usage, Rail Corp boss Ian Hill has allowed guards to use their discretion in regard to its usage.

In Newcastle, there is a problem with inadequate cleaning of trains and platforms due to staff cuts. At Flemington, there is a problem with standby trains where train crews go to the sheds to pick them up only to find they are at Eveleigh or Macdonald Town. They then have to find the trains and then pass back to the sheds. Their shifts are almost over when they get back to the sheds. However RMC is unsympathetic. Guards are also having problems having their crib breaks after they have been on trains for 3-4 hours. Unclean crew crabs are also a problem. At Clyde, station staff are refusing to allow train crews to have access to toilets on the Clyde to Carlingford services.

Concerned Guard

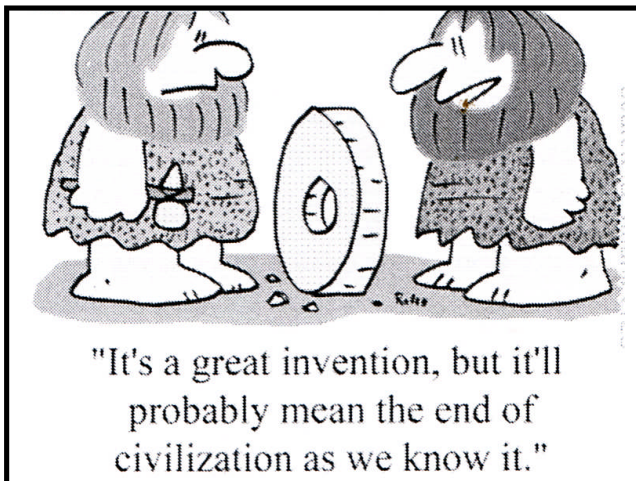
Technological Change - Should workers fear it?

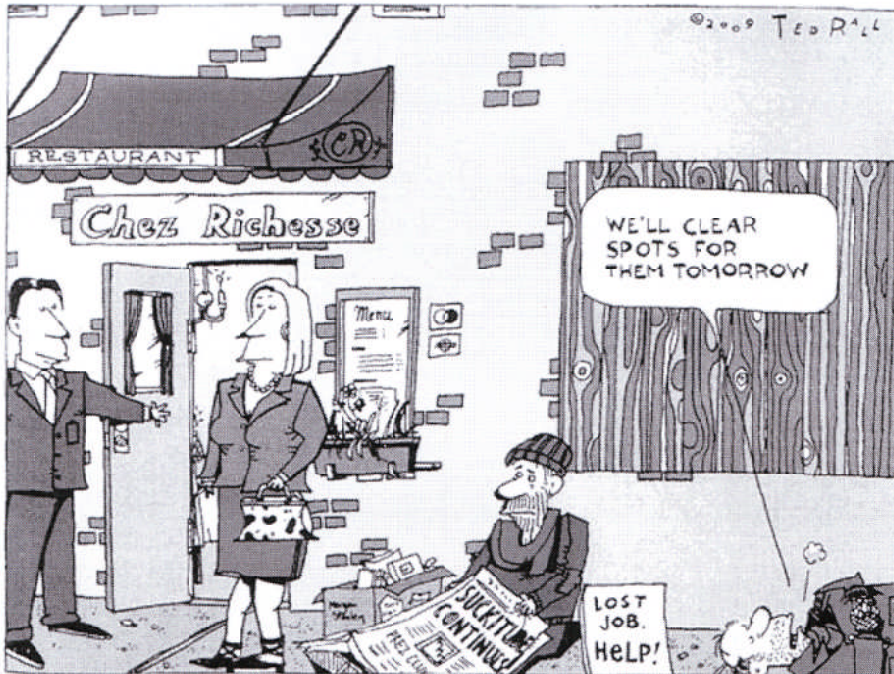
Crimson Coconut

Recent announcements by the NSW government regarding the removal of train guards from rail services and the future possibility of running driver-less trains on new privately owned rail routes caused some consternation amongst rail staff and the RTBU leadership.

Despite privatisation and ownership being the main issue related to driverless trains the RTBU leadership instead spoke out about the unsafe nature of trains without drivers.

This is despite the fact that driverless rail services are operating safely in quite a few countries, generally without incident. Driverless trains are routinely operated on the Paris Metro, Barcelona and Madrid Metro, Seoul Subway, Tokyo Metro, Taipei Metro, and hundreds of other lines around the world from Russia to the USA. The train crew “reforms”





were forecast in the 2010 EBA and had been opposed by many grass roots union members because it gave the Government the right to do as they wished.

The introduction of new technology creeps up on us and we are quick to forget how things were before the latest innovation.

Motorised scrubbing machines now clean station floors replacing what once were gangs of a half a dozen workers or so wielding mops and brooms. Large track maintenance programs now take place with the most modern of equipment. Giant machines require less than a handful of workers. The work is completed in the shortest possible time. Just 50 years ago such work would have required nothing short of a small army of hundreds of workers in a back-breaking and arduous task, working night and day for weeks, if not months, to complete the work. Likewise the use of computers for work sharing, emailing and accessing information has done away with the need for telegrams which were in use frequently right up to a few years ago. Few staff today on the railways would know of, or even need to know of, the telegraphic codes of jargon, which still exist, but are rarely used.

These changes happened without any whimper from rail workers who were freed from unnecessarily labour intensive, anachronistic and repetitive work.

The new announcements about staff reductions are nothing new but they do add renewed pressure to fearful workers because society has changed radically in the last few years. As Australian society and communities around the world have become less egalitarian, (wealth is now concentrated in fewer hands, 1% owning as much as rest of us, the 99%). The loss of

a job in the public sector can lead to years of hardship for individuals. The tightening of eligibility rules for government support and the meagre pensions and benefits for unemployed workers in a tight jobs market all point to the dangers of becoming unemployed. Workers are well aware that they are just a stones throw away from a job loss and an undignified life existing in poverty.

Innovation is, theoretically at least, any new process which gives manufacturers and owners some sort of advantage over the way goods are manufactured or that services are delivered. It is a temporary process that drives the material development of society as a whole and enriches the owners until competitors catch up. For example, IBM the pioneers of the computer age have fallen by the wayside as a major home computer manufacturer and seller. As competitors have caught up through innovation IBM has had to diversify into other areas to survive. IBM are hardly a household name anymore.

The contradiction for workers is that despite the introduction of new technology making tasks easier while massively increasing production, workers generally do not share any of the increased output. Technology's multiplier effect on the productivity of workers instead does away for the need for workers. New technology increases the value of each workers labour but rarely does the worker benefit from this extra surplus value that they produce. Precisely because workers become more efficient they will be more likely to be thrown onto the scrapheap that is unemployment.

Because of the way capitalist society works, any increase in productivity leads to an ever burgeoning profit which is used to increase the dividend to shareholders. It propels the owners of the new technology to a position of wealth and status well above that of the workers using it.

In the case of workers in the public transport industry, (and the public sector in general) changes in work practises brought on by new technology leads to the likelihood of reduced job opportunities and a much greater chance that private operators will take over these functions. The public service provided by the new private operators are then geared towards producing profits rather than providing a public service.

Because we cannot stop progress caused by innovation and new technology workers must look realistically at what can be done so that any changes serve their interests rather than the interests of the owners. There are several ways we can tackle the problem of job losses due to technology.

Workers and unions must work towards a better spread of wealth regardless of peoples contribution to society. Besides, new technology does not necessarily have to lead to job losses.

A new Green Economy based on renewable energy and recycling has the potential to create a very large number of jobs which would be ongoing. By contrast the mining industry is said to employ just under 2% of the workforce. Jobs in the mining sector have a finite lifespan unlike jobs in the renewable sector of the economy. The will to move in the direction of sustainable production though is missing from the political and economic agenda of the mainstream parties despite the looming environmental crisis which endangers human kind.

Video of U.S. occupation forces gunning down Iraqi civilians and TV reporters, yukking it up and cracking jokes, has shocked dozens and dozens of Americans. There's obviously a serious need for

The War Criminal's Guide to Etiquette



Our communities are in crisis due to outdated infrastructure and a massive injection of public funds could provide the jobs needed for community renewal. The building of cycleways, upgrading of public spaces, better and more frequent public transport services, increasing the availability of housing and community health programs and the like has the ability to create many thousands of jobs. These jobs would be created because of advances in technology and the will to use it for the human good.

Workers displaced through technology need to have access to retraining so that they are better prepared for the new roles and jobs which they will undertake. Displaced rail workers and other public transport workers will hardly be prepared to slot into the jobs on offer outside of their traditional tasks. Retraining of workers displaced by technology could also create many thousands of jobs.

Sharing work and reducing work hours is another way of spreading the wealth. However this must not be at the cost of reduced wages. This is one sure way of sharing the proceeds of the increased productivity brought about by the introduction of new technology. Unions have pulled back a long way since the heady days of the 60's and 70's when they advocated a 38 or 36 hour work week. The time has always been right for a continuation of the "Shorter Work Week" campaigns.

Governments continual cutting back on the social wage by raising the retirement age, reducing pensions and unemployment benefits, as well as cutting back on access to education to those who cannot pay the high fees demanded, is another way that the real economy is distorted away from waged workers. The media and politicians continually bleat about how benefits and access to services such as education must be reigned in because the government can't afford it. The truth is that business, especially mining, has never had it so good.

Never before in our history has so much wealth been accumulated in so few hands. Present Governments however would never dream of ending this life of privilege for the elite few on whose power they depend. The solution to increasing the social wage and therefore a fair share of the profits from innovation and new technology will involve a radical change in political perceptions and will require that the current economic order be turned on its head.

It is time to take back our share of production which is increasing with the help of new technology. There seems no point to increasing the productive labour of workers using technology if it does not benefit all of society.

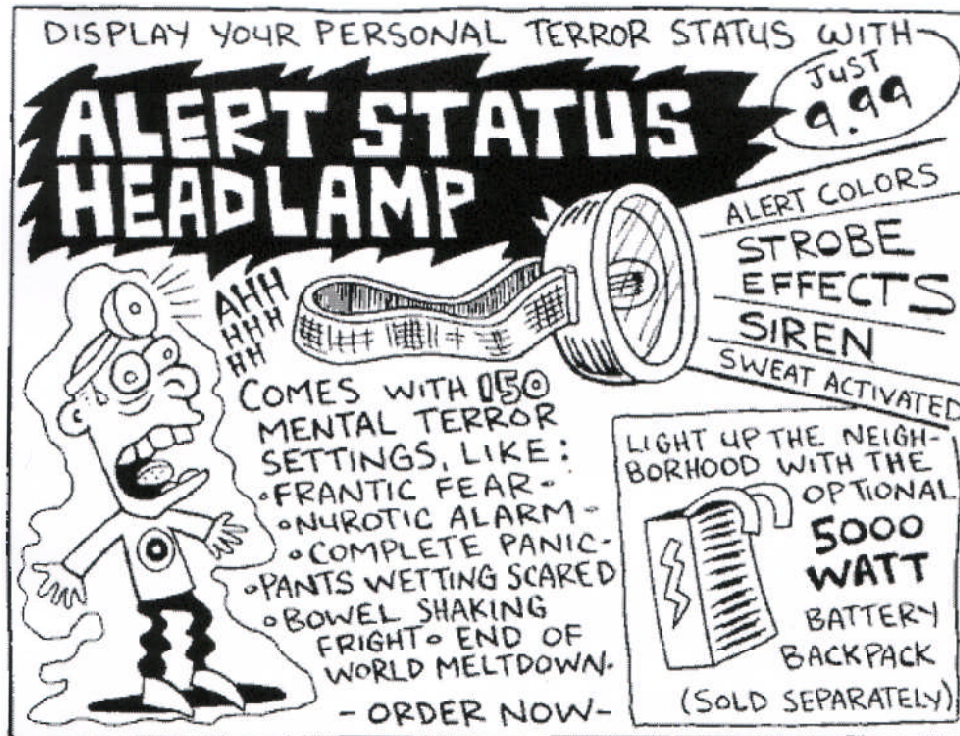
Traditionally unions fought for more leisure time, wage rises based on productivity improvements and a social wage that ensured that even the most disadvantaged of our communities could live in dignity. Today unions are on the back foot defending and losing the hard fought benefits workers had.



The problem of new technology destroying jobs exists only as long as unions fail to realise that freedom from work and freedom from scarcity is a major aspiration of workers. Technology will allow us to move closer to the goal of worker emancipation if it is used for the common good rather than geared towards making profit. Union leaders like those in the RTBU do not know how to fight any more or they lack the political will, so they see technology as a threat rather than as a liberator of workers from the drudgery of everyday existence.

A vision different from that handed down through the media and politicians exists in the heart of every worker, even if what they say is clouded in confusion and mouthed platitudes handed down from the exploiting classes. If unions such as the RTBU are to survive the next decade then they must tap into the real aspirations of their members and learn like King Canute turning back the sea, that it is futile to try and turn back the tide of human desire for technological innovation.

Railing against technological advances goes against the tide of history. Driverless trains, trains without guards and other innovations will come whether we like it or not. The RTBU bulletin citing safety and community concerns reveals much about the thinking within the RTBU leadership. Issues of safety will be overcome. From the unions point of view it should come down to a simple question that is not about jobs or safety but human need and the ownership of wealth.



The way forward is to extend and expand what is possible based on the needs of union members and the community in general, of which members are an integral part. Lets build the future based on human need, using progress and innovation that benefits all, rather than greed. Let's get our fair share of the spoils by challenging and defeating our real enemies not the RTBU's phantoms which the leadership use as an excuse for doing nothing.

RAIL-BUS NEWS

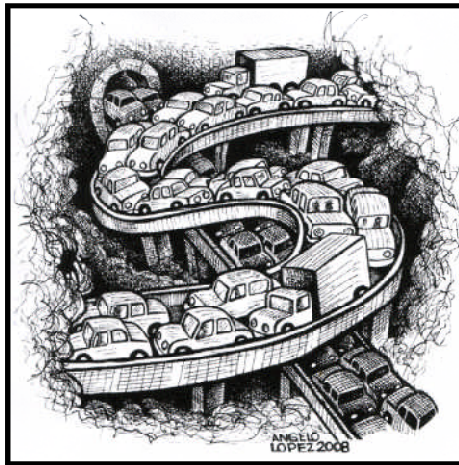
By *The Transport Scrutinizer*

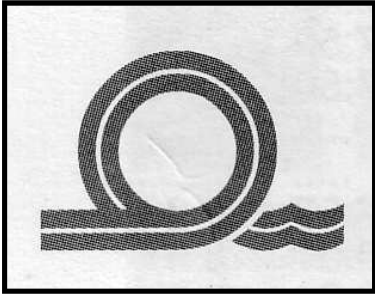
RAILCORP

As I predicted Booz-Allen Consultants have convinced the Government to decimate RailCorp once again. 750 salaried and professional job must go as a result. Only around 240 employees responded so far, so it is only fair to say forced redundancies are likely to happen. Another problem that may soon happen, may well be the removal of Guards from A and H sets, the rumours continue to grow. More staff reviews will see the further reduction of frontline staff from stations in line with the formation of Sydney Trains and NSW Trains.

STATE TRANSIT

The Government has made it quite clear to STA that privatisation is on the agenda once again with more tougher scrutiny of management and operation of services by TfNSW happening immediately. Crackdowns on workers rights such as sick leave, compo, special requests for roster adjustments, union representation on disciplinary issues and the abolition of employee staff buses are just the beginning of a raft of actions specifically designed to demoralise even the most hardened employees. The main focus of all of this is to make all STA staff feel resentful of their organisation and gladly accept hostile private takeover of public bus services. TfNSW YOU ARE ON NOTICE FROM ALL AT STA. IF YOU AND YOUR CRONY GOVERNMENT THINK WE ARE ALL STUPID, THINK AGAIN!!!

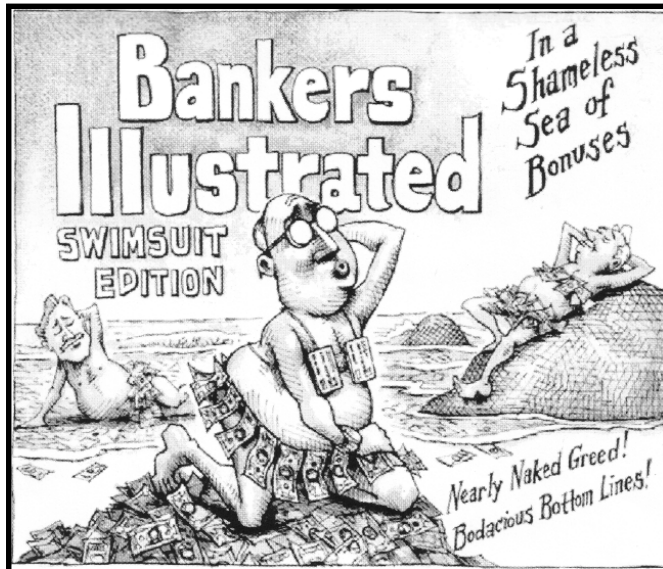




O'FARRELL's SCHUTZENFEST

The NSW O'Farrell Govt. decided to celebrate its deal with the Shooters Party which allowed the privatisation of Electricity Infrastructure with the holding recently of a Schützenfest in exchange for shooters access to national parks. It's rumoured that a secret clause of the deal allows the release of the most rabid and fattest feral fat cats from the Business Council of Australia and the Sydney Chamber of Commerce into national parks to provide more targets for shooters. At the jamboree, as the beer was flowing and clay pigeons were shot, Liberal Party heavy weights such as Barry O'Farrell, Nick Greiner, Mike Baird and their business and public sector boss mates were cavorting in lederhosen slapping each other on the bum.

Peter Rowley, STA CEO, also put his Pinocchio like nose into the merry festivities. However, he soon became trapped in a tent due to its steadily increasing size, following each depot staff meeting he held recently. Where he gave drivers reassurances about being safe from privatisation. At these meetings he also displayed



his contradictions with his insatiable appetite for attacking us, whilst putting out to lower management that we shouldn't bother checking tickets. As a result, the STA is losing millions of dollars. His forked tongue was also in evidence with his claim, that we were all mates. Despite his involvement in the conspiracy to get Chris Mansergh, the former union rep at Port Botany and a trainee sacked, involving the fabrication of a bogus harassment charge. Chris was targeted, as he was too popular and was assisting the grass roots in the fight against the bosses via constantly holding yard meetings. Unlike prior union reps at the depot. Lately Rowley has switched into mafia godfather standover mode with his back mail, that if we don't give up important conditions we will be privatised.

Rowley was subsequently, observed being loudly cheered and clapped by Transport Minister Berejiklian, Veolia CEO and the Sydney Sun Herald Editor as he competed with his nose and tongue tied in large knots, emblazoned with the new Transport NSW Swastika logo on his pinstripe suit, in the piggy back, Government utility budget claw back hammer throwing contest. Bizarrely he was saddled on a trainee STA driver, who had just completed a long stressful shift at a foreign depot. Thanks to the speed up and the current enterprise agreement sell out. The driver had been desperate to boost his low wages with this "moonlighting". Rowley won the contest despite close competition from Rod Mason, Rail Corp CEO wearing shiny new, 3rd Reich jack boots, saddled on a soon to be retrenched rail worker and Barry O'Farrell saddled on a low paid public servant also about to be retrenched. Rowley won \$20 million in bus tickets!!!

The Schutzenfest ended with all the politicians and big bosses slow dancing to the latest neo-liberalism hits of the Big Business Big Band and the Forbes 500 Billionaires choir. Whilst, Rowley threw free bus tickets over the crowd like confetti! Causing a riot as the politicians, executives and CEO's fought over the free tickets on the ground!

S.T.A. BUSIE NEWS

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: How are things at Burwood?

Burwood Driver: Some of the most worrying developments has been blocks of 6-8 new drivers being sent to us from other depots. They are given a brief orientation by the bosses, but it's completely inadequate. As they don't know the runs.

Other news is that the bosses are starting to really hammer drivers on the M41 and are monitoring them with P Tips over cancellations of runs and in some cases drivers are being set up for E1's. The P Tips involving the GPS tracking equipment which all buses are now equipped could help out resolving inefficiencies in the buses, but instead the bosses just used it to punish drivers. These cancellations due to late running are inevitable to due to the unrealistic running times being imposed which provide no time for traffic congestion.

Some weeks ago, the STA CEO visited the depot and held a staff meeting. It focused on the STA's insatiable efficiency drive. Particularly emphasising cutting out drivers, rather than



tackling other well known inefficiencies. Intriguingly at Burwood a lot of new wiring is being installed. So there is new money available for such things, but it must come from the drivers.

This corner cutting is also seriously undermining the quality of bus services. As a cost saving measure the bosses aren't willing to pay for DOC's for corridor supervisors. As a result, there are cases where there are no corridor supervisor on duty. Such a situation occurred the other night and due to a situation at Concord, when we had no corridor supervisor to intervene, we were sent on the wrong route and along roads the buses shouldn't have gone down. Leaving many commuters waiting at bus stops. In another case, a driver was involved in an altercation with a passenger. Again there was no corridor supervisor to intervene. So this driver was kept waiting a considerable time, as the police treated the incident as a low priority.

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

A Visit from "Mr Pinocchio" with "Dollar Signs" in his Eyes

Chief Exec., Peter Rowley, did the rounds of the depots assuring staff that we won't be privatised and that our core work will be quarantined for 3-4 years, while the STA can cut more costs. They will then be forced to compete with private companies for all Sydney contracts. Two weeks later, the Transport Minister says, she will not rule out privatisation. What a joke?! STOP PRESS According to the Sydney Morning Herald Thursday 5th July, the Chief Exec. is now threatening us with privatisation if we don't give back important conditions!

The Holiday Relief (Scrap) Roster was abolished 6 months ago and replaced with specific relief lines below each style of rosters (e.g. AM's, Midday, PM's, Brokens). A form of scrap (in depot) is retained. Anyone on a relief line can be sent to another depot, at any time, based on seniority. So the least experienced drivers, who are still finding their feet at their home depot are being sent en masse to unfamiliar fields.

I recently encountered a driver from another depot, who was driving a bus. He had never driven before. This is totally against STA rules and any driver sent to another depot must be quickly trained on that bus before they go in service. On top of this breach, he was being sent to Birchgrove terminus with a difficult and dangerous turning area – in the dark! Leichhardt drivers are taken to two turning areas (and trained in daylight) including this one, before they ever drive at all in service. This is a totally unacceptable situation. I spent 15 minutes drawing a diagram for this driver, while he drove in service, then explained it to him at my stop for a few minutes. Holding up his passengers. This turning area has obstacles that could result in bus damage from illegally parked vehicles and road furniture.

The bus needs to be raised for a dish gutter. A lamp post hinders the turning circle. The circle needs to be checked for illegally parked vehicles. This driver had none of this information and it was only dumb luck, I was a passenger on his bus!!

LEICHHARDT SHOWS THE WAY FORWARD ON WORKERS' COMP!

On Monday 2nd July a union ballot was held at the depot on the issue of holding a 24 hour stoppage, as a protest against the new workers compensation legislation. It was passed 98 (Yes) 70 (No) and (Informal) 2. This motion must now be now sent around all depots for perusal and potential voting. Then sent to Division Office for decision.

Leichhardt 5 years ago was considered a soft depot. Now we are leading the charge!! When we moved to the new depot, we threatened a snap Leichhardt only strike over such pathetic refusals by management to supply basic amenities e.g. (1) A local phone for family emergencies!! (2) Soap in the kitchen!! The other half dozen requests were as minor. The threat got them talking, but we were definitely walking, if no response!

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What are your thoughts on the STA's "Transition Program"?

Waverley Busie: The STA CEO has been going around the depots holding staff meetings on this subject. The major focus is a report by the O'Farrell Govt's transport advisors, the notorious management consultants, Booz Allen. It's taken a figure out of the air of \$20 million and said we are over budget for this amount. Whilst Veolia claims it can run the STA \$20 million cheaper. However, as we all know, Veolia and other large companies are duplicitous in their claims in business to win contracts and can cook up rubbery figures with the aid of corporate lawyers. It's all about screwing the worker. This duplicity of Veolia was highlighted to me on a recent radio program. It focused on Veolia's tender for some garbage business. I was intending to ring in to the program to dispute Veolia's claims and raise some points about its rubbery figures and duplicitous claims. Was Veolia to be paid by weight of the tip? Is it being paid per tonne for land fill? Why isn't the rubbish being recycled? In the case of the Sydney City Coun-

cil, it outsourced its garbage collection to Veolia just to cut costs. What can this be all about apart from screwing the worker to the limit.

The STA is using this bogus justification for further cost cutting. This amount of \$20 million seems to me to be chicken feed and

is farcical. The STA bosses focus on this issue shows their megalomania. It seems to me to be all about making us more profitable to be flogged off. Probably to this most multi monster company in NSW - Veolia. Apart from garbage trucks, it has interests in the desalination plant and buses. It's no doubt looking for rich pickings with the STA.

The Sunday 3/6/12 edition of the Sun Herald dropped the bomb shell of O'Farrell plans for the privatisation of the STA. The Government didn't deny it was under consideration. It seems due to the existence of the current enterprise agreement, it's unlikely, the STA would be flogged off until 2014. Latest news is that the CEO has been blatantly trying to blackmail us into agreeing to more casuals, cuts to rosters and other give backs using the threat of privatisation.

On a recent 2BL radio program, the President of the Bus and Coach Association, Frank Diapuzzo was interviewed about the issue of the STA's privatisation and its takeover by Veolia. He was very careful in his answers. He knew what to say and what not to say. He gave the impression he knew a lot more than he was letting on. He talked vaguely about rosters and wouldn't elaborate. He seemed to be using "code" words. What does this mean in reality? Casualisation? Different companies bringing in workers?

Sparks: What's the latest with the toilets?

WB: The salt cleaning solution isn't being put in the men's toilets at North Bondi. As a result, an unhygienic odour is present, even in winter. Without even going inside the toilets at North Bondi, you smell it. The male toilets at the Bondi Junction interchange are a disgrace. At the old interchange 12 to 13 years ago the toilets were adequate in their condition. However at the new interchange, complaints about the toilets are being made constantly. There are a range of problems such as the noisy fan, a cubicle door which has been kicked in which no one has bothered to fix, urine all over the floor, poor toilet flushing, toilet paper rolls missing, too few cubicles and the obvious need for regular checks. Whilst 200 drivers are supposed to use these



appalling facilities. It's farcical! The STA bosses are even corner cutting on hygiene to save a few dollars. Everything is being clawed back to save money. It's like a game. The STA bosses are treating us like the lowest common denominator. There are plenty of ex-professional people on this job, who are scratching their heads about this type of treatment. One driver was so angered by the situation that he is taking this issue up with the OH&S committee, which must look at this and get all the toilets cleaned and done up.

Another example of how ludicrous this corner cutting has become, is an incident in which I was involved the other day. I took a bus at the shed and went to Nth Bondi. At the terminus, I noticed an internal panel on the bus had become detached and was over hanging passengers seats. I contacted the radio room who advised a changeover would be supplied at Bondi Junction. At the interchange instead of being issued with the changeover, an inspector from Grafton Street had some gaffer tape. When he came over to repair the panel, he laughed saying the tape was the STA's ideal fix it. A masking tape to cover up, the STA's deficiencies!

Sparks: How are things on the privatisation front?

WB: Some on the latest news is that the Parramatta to Liverpool T-Way has been sold to a private bus company. T-Way drivers were given the option of either going over to the private company or returning to their depots of origin. Given the worse conditions of the private company, I assume most returned to STA depots.

Whilst the Ferries will be sold off by the end of July. Were Ferry Skippers paid a bonus as an inducement to go over to the franchisees? Recently I was down at the ferries wharf at the Quay and noticed a group of ferry workers on one of the piers. I pulled up one of the guys and asked him what was going on in the ferries. He mentioned they were attending an induction for the new franchises which will be taking over. I asked him whether anything will change with the franchising. According to him, he was guaranteed by the new management that it would be like the old government operator. I replied, "just wait, you'll see marked differences." With a private mob taking over a utility, it may look good at the beginning, but later you'll see the nasty side.

Sparks: How are things with the cleaners, mechanics and fuelers?

WB: They are being shafted! At Pt. Botany, cleaners and mechanics have left due to being given the run around by incompetent bosses who lack integrity. The mechanics are suffering and don't have to put up with the callous behaviour of the bosses. Heavy diesel mechanics can find work at many other places. At Waverley, cleaners and fuelers are not getting extra overtime despite increased workloads. Every corner in their jobs is being investigated by the bosses to deliver an outcome. It reminds me of the Nazis. In their concentration camps under the control of Himmler, the wrong kind of efficiency was displayed with everything being itemised and taken from their victims such as gold, false teeth, glasses, etc and the inmates separated according to category. The fuelers and cleaners are being intimidated and demonised to facilitate the split up of the STA into sections.

Sparks: How are STA Administrative staff faring

WB: They are working under tremendous pressure. They now, all have to reapply for their positions. Looking at my supervisor, I can see he's not happy, behind his smile. I can see he's

been put under more pressure and has to perform more or lose his job. This will mean more pressure put on to us. The other day, a lady from Head Office caught my bus. She displayed her home and duty pass and said, "this will be gone soon!"

Recently, our friend Omar, sundries staff member, who handles lost property and other duties was given his marching orders. As part of his sacking, he had to sit for a basic test, what I call a "failure" test. To receive a final payment, he and others had to attend a type of induction. One of our guys, mentioned that people from all parts of the STA particularly office staff were attending it. The course is all about helping you apply for jobs outside the STA by helping you write resumes. In a private company, you would never get this type of assistance, but I'm not saying it's good. This cutting of staff is happening across board in the public sector with O'Farrell's drive to save money.

Sparks: What are your thoughts on fighting the push for privatisation in the STA and other attacks by the O'Farrell Govt.?

WB: The union hierarchy such as Unions NSW has spread the illusion that we need to be re-vamped and modernised and just focus on computerised communications such as digital media to get the message across of the need to resist the O'Farrell attacks and token single issue rallies such as on Workers Comp on Wed 13/6/12. We are all getting sick of being pushed



around by the O'Farrell Govt. and need to fight it like the teachers' union. A work mate the other day mentioned to me how inspired he was by the recent strike by teachers over attacks by the O'Farrell Govt. He was angered by the O'Farrell Govt wanting to vastly increase the amount of the fining of the Teachers' union from \$10,000 to \$200,000 for what it considers as illegal stoppages, but what I call democracy! He considered we need the right strike if we are to effectively fight O'Farrell.

Sparks: What are views on the union question?

WB: Without union membership you are very vulnerable from the bosses' attacks. Some years ago, my sister was working at a nonunionised home visiting firm and a resident who was suffering from dementia falsely accused her of stealing \$100. Despite the mental incapacity of this lady, her word was accepted by management and my sister was instantly sacked. She had no organisation to assist her and had to find another job with now a black mark on her name. This an example of what can happen without workplace union organisation to help fight the bosses.

Sparks: What are your impressions of the speed limits on the bendibuses?

WB: The other day I was going through a tunnel on the Eastern Distributor and noticed in the 2nd lane in the same direction, a lot of traffic congestion caused by a bendibus. It was travelling at its severely restricted, speed limit of 50 kmp, imposed by the STA bosses to save a few dollars on fuel. However, the maximum speed limit for vehicles in the tunnel was 80 kmp. It seemed to me a situation from the horse and cart era, when vehicles had a much less speed capacity. Is the STA really making savings by such measures? I don't really know. It's certainly a hindrance to traffic. Whilst the union has claimed a minor victory on the issue. As they obliged the STA to put signs on the back of the bendies for motorists to take account of the 50 kmp speed limit of these buses.

Sparks: How things with the transit officers?

WB: Recently I was passing the STA office in Parramatta. I noticed a group of 5-6 transit officers outside the office and had a brief conversation with them. The transit officers often come from an elite military back ground such as the SAS and were highly trained. They were all scratching their heads about their poor treatment by the Transport Minister. They mentioned that she recently featured at a public transport forum in Baulkham Hills where she was unable to handle questions from the floor. She gave the impression that she knew little about the job. However, she has an unhealthy obsession with chopping out jobs. They felt they were on a merry go round with their jobs, as for the 3rd time, they had to reapply for their positions.

Sparks: What nasty surprises are likely to occur with the STA takeover by a private company?

WB: Few people on the job who voted for O'Farrell, look at a range of issues which will have to be dealt with under privatisation: Will the institute still be operational? What changes will have to be made to the Institutes constitution? Your canteen, is that continuing as a going concern? Will you have time off for running and fishing clubs?

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In issues 132 and 134, mention was made of a Conductor Service Manager bullying employees and of an employee being given a final warning. In this issue Conductors, Station Staff, Drivers and Staff from Head Office will discuss these ongoing issues. Once again names have been changed.

Sparks: Three years ago, we reported about a Conductor Service Manager bullying employees. What has happened?

Clarence: Nothing.

Misha and Manfred: You are correct. We spoke about this person in issue 132. This issue received a lot of support from the rank and file, but Human Resources had other ideas.

Sparks: What ideas?

Misha: They called a number of employees before their respective managers to find out who wrote the article. You see Human Resources promised to terminate the persons who wrote the article.

Manfred: The number of employees who read the article in 132 supported the persons who wrote the article. As one of the V/Line workers said, "SPARKS stands for free speech".

Sheona: In Head Office, where I work one can observe people. During a lunch break I heard a number of employees discussing SPARKS issues 132 and 134. One employee stated that the people who wrote the article were disloyal to the Company and were the lowest of the low and would not put their names in the article.

Clarence: We maybe a low bunch of workers, but you have to stand up and be counted. The reasons names are changed is because of what happened 25 years ago. In those days, there used to be a Victorian Edition of SPARKS. One of the workers who contributed to SPARKS was using his name. Management hounded this person and tried to discipline him on trivial issues. He always stood up to them.

Sparks: You can see why we change names. People are frightened to come forward. We prefer to keep our contributors anonymous.

Rastus and Roscoe: At this point being drivers, we have had trouble with this Conductor Supervisor. You see during a number of service disruptions, a number of Drivers asked the Conductors to come up to the Drivers' cab to discuss the disruption. There are issues we cannot talk about over the radio. On one of the stations during a delay, one of the drivers observed this person hiding in a waiting room. We think he was spying.

Clarence: You are correct. This how low this person could go.

Misha: This Supervisor always picked on female Conductors.

Roscoe: Yes, he did. Being a Bully, this is all he was good at.

Rastus: One of our drivers observed an incident on a station platform, where this person belittled a female Conductor. He claimed that she did not close the doors on an N Set. The Con-



ductor said both green door lights were on, thus the doors were closed. He ignored her explanation and he humiliated her.

Misha: The Conductor was distressed and reported this Bully to management.

Sparks: What did they do?

Manfred: Nothing. The Conductor told management that if this person ever again got on a train, she was running, she would walk off.

Rastus: We, drivers, would have supported her.

Manfred: Management said that it was against the industrial relations act to refuse to work with a person.

Rastus: Yes, it is, but a bully like him would you walk off.

Roscoe: In issue 132, mention was made of this person spying on a Conductor from a driver's cab in the middle of a velocity train. What happened here was the driver of the train told the manager to tell him to get out of the cab or it would not move. He moved. We, drivers, stood up to him. To hell with the industrial relations Act.

Clarence: In issue 134, an article was written about a female Conductor who on departing a train with an N set, shut the doors and a passenger jumped on the train through the Van door.

Misha: Yes, this was a sad case. The train was departing and the passenger jumped on the train. He knocked the Conductor over. This supervisor was on the train and stood the Conductor down and she had to front Human Resources.

Roscoe: The Conductor was put on a Final Warning.

Sparks: Is this warning still in force.

Rastus: Yes it is. Three years has passed since the incident occurred and the Conductor is still on the final warning.

Misha and Manfred: Human Resources despite representations from the Union and Train Passengers with not remove the warning.

Clarence: In the meantime, this Supervisor was bullying Conductors.

Manfred: He had his friends and spies who would report to him what the Conductors were doing and some Conductors would report to him if a Conductor did the wrong thing on a train.

Rastus and Roscoe: Yes, these idiots thought that by putting other Conductors on paper to him, they would be on his good books, but he was using these idiots.

Sheona: Despite him being a bully, Human Resources would not remove him, because if he was removed, they would admit, they made a mistake.

Sparks: In conducting, this person should have been removed. It would have restored harmony in the country depot and removed a fair amount of tension around the workplace.

Misha and Manfred: Towards the end of last year, ticket irregularities were discovered at this particular depot where he worked. As there are legal issues regarding this matter, we cannot say anymore. It will have to wait for a future issue.

Clarence: It is good, he has been removed, but unfortunately, it had to be on an issue of tickets.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, the Conductors had to put up with this Bully. We hope when the enquiry over the tickets is resolves, that he is removed. Finally, what goes around comes around. Remember support SPARKS.

BRITISH BUS NEWS

Bus drivers strike over Olympic bonuses.

22/6/12

A 24-hour London bus strike has begun following the collapse of peace talks in a dispute over Olympics payments.

The walkout by thousands of members of Unite at 17 bus companies in pursuit of a £500 payment for working during the Games will hit most parts of London, disrupting travel for commuters and tourists.

Transport for London (TfL) said, however, that more than a third of bus services were running. These are mainly in central, south and north-west London after a high court judge

granted an injunction on behalf of three operators. It is understood that around 85% of the total workforce is on strike.

Despite the injunction, Unite said thousands of bus workers would stage the first city-wide walkout since 1982, after peace talks at the Acas conciliation service failed. It said strikes by staff at the 17 remaining operators would go ahead because they were not affected by the injunction over balloting anomalies.

Unite's regional officer, Peter Kavanagh, said bus operators were "refusing to enter into genuine and timely negotiations" over Unite's demands that bus workers receive a £500 payment in line with their peers on the London Underground, London Overground and Docklands Light Railway networks.

Warning that strikes during the Games were possible, he said: "If the operators shirk their responsibilities now they will sow the seeds of massive anger and frustration across the bus network, inevitably leading to strife and industrial action during and way beyond the Olympic Games."

London bus operators said in a statement that they had put together a package that would have awarded bus workers £500 each if they worked throughout the 29 days of the Olympics and Paralympics – a shift pattern that Unite dismissed as impossible.

"Unite's demand, which includes paying a bonus to staff irrespective of whether they are working over this period, would amount to over £20m," said the operators. The main source of funding was an £8.3m payment from the Olympic Delivery Authority, which bus operators now fear will be withdrawn by the London mayor, Boris Johnson. "We are fearful that the additional money made available by the ODA has now been lost. We can only apologise for the disruption that will be caused to bus passengers," the companies said.

At West Ham bus depot, a few miles from the Olympic stadium, striking bus drivers said they would take industrial action during the Games if they had to. Speaking anonymously, one said: "We don't want to do that, but we feel like we have been pushed around." Another driver said employees deserved similar Games payments to colleagues at London Underground, London Overground and the Docklands Light Railway, who will be paid between £500 and £900. "We don't want to go on strike but we have got no choice but to resort to this, to point



out to Transport for London that we do the same work as our colleagues in other transport departments and we should be paid for it,” the driver said.

The Unite shop steward at West Ham depot, Ismael Kanu, 48, said TfL’s refusal to match the tube, overground and DLR payments was disrespectful to bus workers. “We are just asking for our own reward,” said Kanu, a London bus employee for 27 years. Asked if he was prepared to strike during the Games, he said: “If that’s what it takes, yes, we will strike during the Games.” The West Ham depot serves eight routes that go via the stadium, but was inactive on Friday morning, with only a dozen buses leaving since the strike began at 3am.

Drivers at the depot, which is run by Stagecoach, also disputed TfL’s claim that the bus network would not be as overloaded as the tube or DLR during the Games. “As soon as the underground is overcrowded, it is bus drivers who pick up the pieces,” said one driver. Another added: “We deal with passengers face-to-face, the aggro. We should be rewarded for that because I am sure we are going to get more of that [during the Games].”

Kanu added that drivers would not accept TfL’s offer of a bonus for drivers on routes directly linked to the Olympics, in effect ruling out a bonus for drivers in the outer boroughs. “It’s totally wrong. We are fighting for workers in London as a whole. The tourists coming to watch the Games will be everywhere around London.”

Talks to avert the strike broke down despite the intervention of Johnson, who has secured £8.3m from the ODA to help settle the dispute. Unite’s demands required a further £6m from the bus operators, the ODA and TfL, although operators now claim that number would have to be doubled.

Johnson said: “It seems to me that some militant union leaders remain hell-bent on strike action, and that is wholly unacceptable. I want the people of London and our honest and hard-working bus drivers to know that we’ve gone the extra mile, money is on the table, this offer is fair, but it is also conditional on drivers not taking strike action.”

Bus operators, who are paid a set fee for running services in London, insist that they could not afford to meet Unite’s demands without a subsidy from TfL, which in turn argued that the dispute had to be settled by Unite and the operators.

Peter Hendy, the transport commissioner, said: “It is now clear that the leadership of Unite were intent on a strike all along. They have pursued this unnecessary course of action despite an extra £8.3m being brokered by the mayor that would allow every bus driver in London in a garage where one or more routes were affected by the 2012 Games to gain, over the 29 days of the competitions, about £500.”

He added: “We are now working together with our partners to ensure that Londoners and visitors have alternative travel options and the necessary advice to enable them to get around. I would advise everybody to use other transport services, to consider walking and cycling for shorter journeys and to check before travelling at www.tfl.gov.uk/buses.”

The capital’s bus network carries more than 6 million passengers on a weekday, compared with 3.5 million on the tube. TfL has accused Unite of “attempting to exploit the Games spirit and add a further multimillion-pound burden to the hard-pressed fare and taxpayers of London”.

BUS WILDCAT STRIKE

A short piece in the Evening Standard yesterday mentioned a wildcat bus action in North London yesterday 27/6/12.

Bus staff start protesting over Olympics bonus payments

Action by bus workers halted 33 services during the morning peak today.

Workers trapped vehicles in the depots and police had to be summoned to halt the protests and let vehicles out.

The wildcat action was condemned as “deplorable” by Transport for London (TfL.)

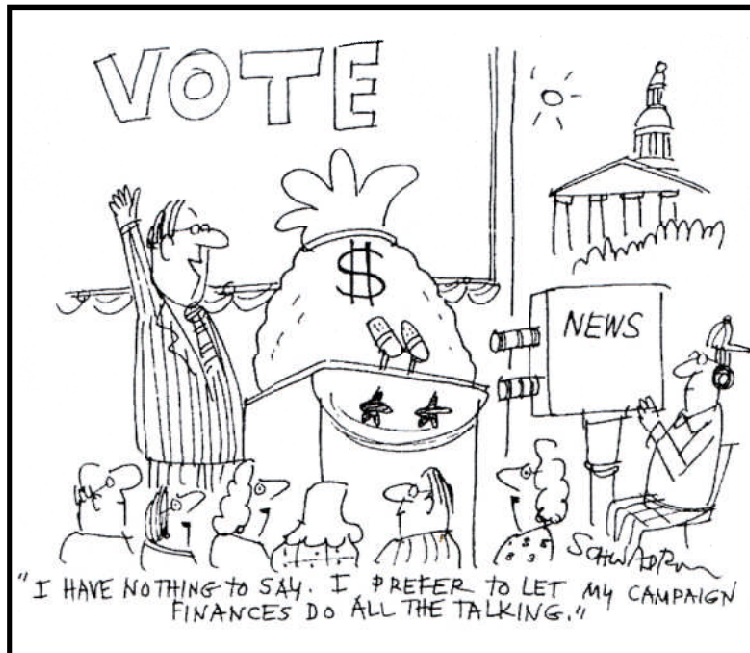
Workers were protesting over failed demands for a £500-a-time Olympic bonuses.

It came as union bosses at Unite, staging its annual general meeting at Brighton, decided the next course of action which has already led to a 24-hour strike in pursuit of the bonuses for all 20,000 plus staff.

The protests took place at the Holloway Road, Cricklewood, Waterloo, Wood Green and Tottenham depots. A TfL spokesman said “Protesters at five bus garages caused disruption to 33 bus services this morning. The Metropolitan Police Service were called in each case and all buses have now resumed passenger service.

“The payment of bus staff for the Olympic and Paralympic Games is a matter for the private companies who employ them. Any disruption to transport services for Londoners is simply deplorable especially in circumstances where the employers’ offer has not even been put to the bus workers themselves”.

The protest came as 220 workers at the Boris Bike scheme were awarded £500 Olympic bonuses - putting added pressure on the capital’s private sector bus operators to pay their staff the same amount.



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.

Only in this way will we see the creation of a democratic, united, fighting organisation which can stand up for the rights of workers and their families against unhelpful union officials, bosses, political parties and governments.

MEMBERS' VOICE WEB SITE:

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

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