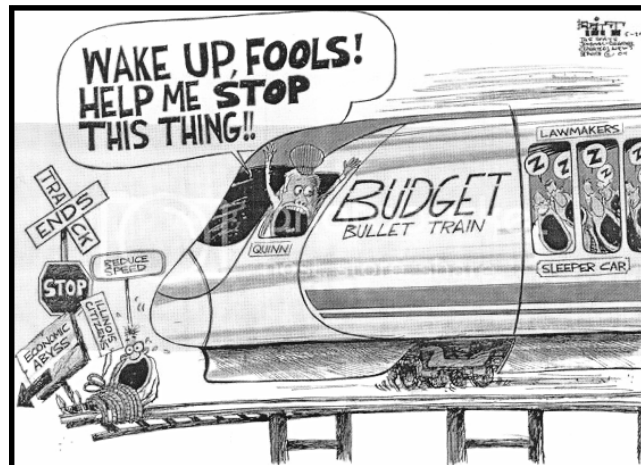


Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

- * **Don't be conned by Claassens and the Bosses' 'Stalling for Time' over Safety Negotiations!**
- * **The new Safety Report is written by a corporate insider. Can he be trusted to deliver for workers over the safety of DOO's?**
- * **Unleashing further Wildcat action will defeat new DOO interurbans & Wage Freeze!**



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Corporate Love Birds P8 ;	NSW Wage Freeze P3;
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Country Rail Line Closure P7;	PT Privatisation in Oz P18;

EDITORIAL

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

Wildcat Springs into Action!

Some of the most explosive news in the NSW Railways lately was of course the wildcat strike on 27/11/20 by drivers over the testing of new interurban trains for DOO (Driver Only Operation). The action resulted in the temporary cessation of the testing by management. It just goes to show that the direct action message pushed in Sparks over many years is having an important impact on the job. Even the RTBU hierarchy have had to go along with it, supporting the strike. In stark contrast to their normal legalistic stance and focusing on such lame duck measures as petitions to parliament over issues. Whilst union funds are squandered on a new legal officer position. When direct action gets the goods. Unfortunately the union officials look to be planning a big sell out on DOO on the new trains. In regard to the so-called safety report of the RTBU officials. It was drafted by a well-known corporate insider, who was a consultant in the Glenbrook Rail Disaster Inquiry which failed to raise in its report the likely contribution of DOO to the accident. Why would you pay for this report when the guards and drivers were doing their own risk assessment. This is the path that the turn to legalism takes the union. It totally discounts the opinion of members. The legal eagle that requested the report (available on the RTBU website, but heavily redacted. why?) trying to justify the trial using legalistic means. We have to counter this top down legalistic unionism because it is a bosses court and because the members have no input to the decision. Only direct action gets the goods. It's unlikely there will be a decision on the new trials until the new year. Especially as they see keeping the dispute in-house and secret as the only option. Secretary Claassens was party to the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) based on secret 'back room' negotiations, okaying DOO on the new trains way back in 2017 (check our web site www.sparksworld.org for a copy as the union officials seem too frightened to put on the union web site) and okayed a likely fake 'trial' of the new trains on 16/12/2019. Abruptly backing off support for the so-called trial, following an edition of Sparks highlighting the likely duplicity and stirring up the grass roots. (See article page 3.)

Direct action can be effective over the new trains, so why not over the NSW Wage Freeze and pay caps? Currently the RTBU hierarchy, other union officials and Unions NSW are caving in completely on this major attack by the NSW Government. Obviously the RTBU hierarchy can't be trusted to run any effective campaign over these issues. It's urgent that an unofficial co-ordinating committee is established to run a direct action campaign. (See article page 3.) Another important issue we are focusing upon in this edition is the move to close sections of the Casino to Murwillumbah railway line. (See article page 7.)

Some of the most important news in Sydney Buses has been the timetable changes as of 25/10/20. These changes have provided a pretext for savage attacks on ex-STA drivers in Transit Systems Region 6, costing these drivers many lines of work and wages. Meanwhile there are double standards occurring in regard to implementing COVID 19 safety procedures. (See article page 12.)

Sparks welcomes contributions by transport workers. Please send to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW or via our web site www.sparksworld.org Subscrip-

See page 20

N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

Bring It On

By Crimson Coconut.

The Predicament

The predicament which working people are finding themselves in is a sad indictment of the whole trade union movement in this country. It is the movement's pandering to political parties rather than taking direct action that is a serious problem. It has hamstrung the whole union movement and subordinated members to a dead-end electoral strategy. The trade union movement may be "worried" about what is coming. What are they doing about it? Absolutely nothing from what I can see.

Oh yes, there is a petition campaign, but that won't worry the Morrison Government or force them to their knees in the Hillsong Church to ask for forgiveness. Most of the LNP will wipe their arses with the petition when we should be making them quake in their boots.

With trade union membership at such a low ebb the whole trade union movement is in danger of imploding under a sustained attack from the LNP and businesses.

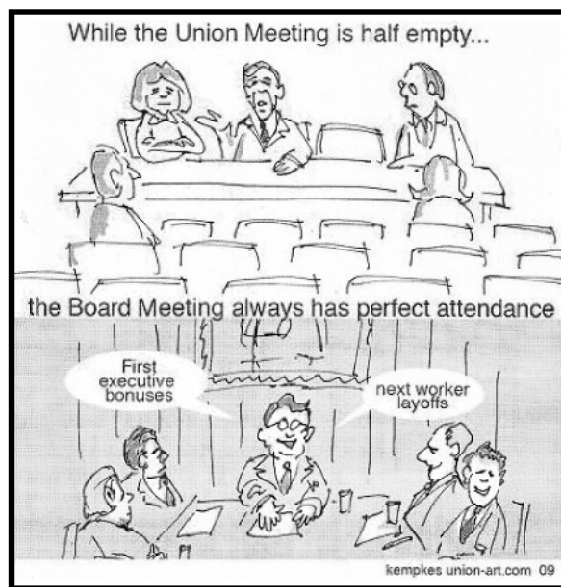
The New Accord type speech from A.C.T.U. Secretary Sally McManus this week is another sign that we are being led up another blind alley, as we were during the Hawke and Keating years. But this time it could be the end game rather than business as usual. Unions were healthy, robust and prepared to flex a bit of muscle in the past, even if it meant deregistration and calling out the troops. Today the will and ability is not there in the leadership.

The Wildcat

Recently the Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) commissioned a report on the safety of new trains purchased by the N.S.W Government from Korea. The company, that previously has worked for the mining industry, issued the report tabling some of the safety issues on the new trains. The person contracted to make the report had previously worked as a manager for the State Rail Authority in many safety related positions, including leading the investigation into the Glenbrook incident and assisting in the inquiry into the Waterfall incident. The tabled report did not specifically address the removal of guards except as part of an overall operation of a safety system.

Shortly after the production of the report the R.T.B.U. issued a petition calling on the N.S.W. Government to address the safety issues with the new inter-city fleet. For the train crews this lame action would have solved nothing.

There was consternation amongst train drivers as to why they should staff a train under changed working methods that were clearly unsafe. It was work usually carried out by the train guards using proven protocols and a division of labour. Many of the train crew were unhappy with an industrial tactic that involved petitioning the NSW Government that was initi-



ated by the union leadership, when clearly the new trains were unsafe. "Just stop staffing the trains", the drivers said.

Somewhere after the petition was issued the pressure from below was acceded to and a strike was supported by the Union. This was not before Transport for NSW had tried to overcome the ban by drivers by organising scabs to staff the trial of the new intercity fleet.

On the morning that the trial was to begin most Drivers refused to sign on for regular duties and the morning rush hour. The system was at a standstill. NSW called off the trials and promised to enter into talks with the union.

Drivers will have to be on their guard, as talks alone cannot solve this impasse. The issues can only be solved by workers standing up and refusing to staff the unsafe trains.

I have heard a substantial majority of Drivers are not prepared to do the Safe Working of the Guards (who have been reduced to Customer Service Staff under the proposal. - this is a clear excuse to get rid of their jobs altogether down the track). This would mean drivers refusing to operate passenger doors or making sure that passengers were clear, which is a guards job.

Drivers have the upper hand, they need to keep the little power that they have as many other sections within the railways have very little in the way of industrial muscle. That includes Guards.

Useless Petitions

The A.C.T.U. facing the worst attacks on working conditions since Work Choices has just issued a call to action. The action involves signing a petition against the changes being brought in by the LNP Government which is aimed at downgrading conditions and wages.

As useless as a hole in a donut. Petitions have become the instrument of fashionable fake industrial action of many unions. It's a do nothing strategy.

There are many disgruntled union members out there and there are signs that there are cracks and divisions appearing in the union movement. There are those that want an organised national strike and those that want anger to continue right up to a Federal Election. The idea that neither the LNP nor the ALP are the saviours of working people is gaining traction.

After the horrible deaths of 5 food delivery cyclists, who had been pushed to their working limits leading to their demise, the leading lights of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) held an impressive press conference. They spoke about how the working conditions of these driv-

ers had led to their deaths and that protections had to be put in place and legislation changed. Next day the T.W.U. issued a public petition imploring the Federal Government to legislate to protect precarious workers in the “gig economy”. The petition is a total waste of time as it removes workers in the front lines from the real struggle of confronting employers and the government. Nothing beats organising on the front lines.

Legislation released by the Federal Government over the last few days weakens rather than strengthens conditions for the casual workforce. That shows that the Government is moving in the opposite direction in an attempt to further weaken the conditions and pay of casual workers. It certainly proves that petitions don’t have any effect.

The Public Sector Wage Freeze

Which brings me to the lack of action around the NSW Public Sector Wage Freeze. (There is also a wage freeze on Federal Public Sector workers.)

We in the Rail division are bound by an Agreement comprising a 3% wage rise every year till the end of the agreement. This is written in stone. We all supposedly voted for binding the Government, the Unions and Us to the agreement. Before the current agreement the Government was offering public transport workers a measly 2.5% capped rise.

Now, despite the agreement, the NSW Government is freezing wage rises at no more than 0.3% this year, due to the pandemic, rising to 1.5% the following year. What is the point of a Fair Work Commission if the employer can dictate what wage rates workers get. This is dictatorship. But what have we heard about organising a fight back against this from the relevant unions? Absolutely zilch, zero, nothing.

The wage freeze in NSW and in the Federal Public sector affects many people that were in the front lines during the pandemic. That included nurses, police, teachers and public transport workers, postal workers. All of them are essential service workers.

According to an article in the Financial Review:

“University of Sydney Business School Professor John Buchanan argued the NSW government was “one of the major wage-setting forces in Australia right now” and its policy would entrench low wage growth as a community norm.”

“Traditionally people look at the power of unions and industrial tribunals but in the current situation Treasury is setting these major norms,” he said.

“It’s not just about NSW, it’s about what signals are being sent to the labour market at large.”

<https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/workplace/nsw-public-sector-wage-cap-very-generous-20201103-p56b1o>

If ever there was a time to stand up and defend what we have and what we deserve it is now. With a decent but widespread public campaign against the wage freeze I believe we had a chance to overturn it. It may have been a popular campaign if it was enthusiastically waged, especially following the public appreciation of all those workers who sacrificed their health through exposure and extra workload during the virus outbreak. But what did we get from the organised unions and Unions NSW? Absolute silence.

Where to from here?

It will be interesting to hear from you and also to put forward ideas about what can be done. The thing is that the leadership that we relied on in the trade unions is failing us. We can all list instances where they failed to fight, whether that be not supporting widespread dissent over the last E.B.A. to the removal and privatisation of many of the services on stations, such as cleaning, ticketing and customer service.

It comes down to what we can do ourselves. Together, we can build, we can learn to resist and to be resilient. How do we restart a dying corpse of a union movement breathing new life, momentum and fire into its belly?

The only possibility of changing from the inertia that pervades the union bureaucracy is having the fight. Education is a big thing for moving the struggle forward. Just getting work comrades together to help them organise is a difficult task. Trying to prompt them towards a class consciousness which is essential to understand what is going on is even harder, simply because the task of rebuilding is urgent.

The biggest effect on changing consciousness is a respected leadership that takes the time to take up the fight, to educate and respect the aspirations of the members. Leading by example is a very good teacher. Not that there are any current leaders that deserve to be emulated. In the absence of effective and inspiring leadership we have to become masters of our own destiny and step forward bravely, learning as we go. Work with colleagues, inspiring and strengthening and cementing ties as you move forward together. "From Little Things Big Things Grow".



The lack of democracy within unions makes our task of fighting for change that much harder. For instance, organisers and some union leaders are not elected and are usually foisted on members. Usually Organisers are appointed A.L.P. hacks that have no interest in the needs of members.

These days there is also convenient recourse to a legal path in an industrial dispute rather than organising members. Most unions now have extensive legal teams and are recruiting more legal eagles by the month. This cuts workers off from the struggle, they don't learn about their real strengths and it reduces the need for real solidarity. The real fight for our jobs and conditions is on the shop floor, not in the courtroom behind closed doors.

Fighting and losing and fighting and winning, but fighting. Not capitulating with statements that are mouthed both by Scott Morrison and Sally McManus that "we are all in this together". For clearly most of us are not in it at all at the moment.

Last chance to save railway line

by Beth Shelley, Northern Rivers Railway Action Group

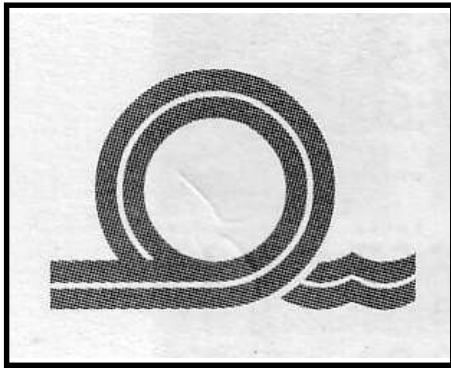
The bill to close sections of the Casino to Murwillumbah railway line went to parliament last Wednesday. Up until it was tabled in parliament, this proposed legislation had not been made available for consultation with the community which it directly affects. Moreover, the legislation seems to have been directly targeted to a specific result of closing both ends of the line. The Northern Rivers Railway Action Group (NRRAG) were shocked to find that the Casino to Bentley section was to be closed and the railway tracks destroyed, along with the section from Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. We had been told that funding for Casino to Bentley was supposed to be a partnership between the State and Federal governments, but the funding was only offered by the Federal government through Kevin Hogan, and both Geoff Provest and Janelle Saffin told us that the NSW Government was not interested in the Casino to Bentley section of the Rail Trail. It seems suspicious that the Federal Government want to be involved in a project that appropriates land that belongs to the NSW Government.



Why are they interested in funding a bike path when it will annihilate our chance of ever having trains again? This is our rail connection to Sydney and Brisbane gone forever for Northern Rivers residents. What is really going on? The reason for the proposed legislation change was to be about developing the rail trail from Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. However, rail trails don't require a change in legislation and can be established without removing the railway tracks. This has happened in other parts of NSW such as Dubbo and Oberon. Tweed Shire Council decided to tender to include the option of putting the rail trail next to the railway track a year ago, but this idea was not investigated by Tweed Council staff. Instead the State government is insisting the legislation must go through even before any tenders go out.

The legislation states that local councils will be responsible for ongoing maintenance and upkeep rather than the NSW Government. Are local ratepayers aware they will be paying for the maintenance of the rail trail?" One of the questionable issues is what is going to happen with the high voltage power line that runs beside the track in Murwillumbah including through the tunnels? Is Transgrid concerned about bike riders and walkers being within close proximity of the 80 KV transmission line? Byron Shire has intentions to establish a local rail service and closure of the Casino end will result in it being orphaned from the rest of the State's railway network. This legislation will pass through the Lower House of the parliament this week supported by the government and will then go to the Upper House. This will be our only chance to save our railway line, and we ask supporters across the region to ask Upper House MPs from Labor and the crossbenchers to vote against the change to the legislation. Please contact us for any further information. Email: bethshelley4@yahoo.com.au

Thanks to Nimbin Good Times 20/10/20



The Corporate Love Birds Making NSW Great Again! Wedding of the Year! (A Political Satire)

On Tuesday 2nd March 2021 invitations were sent at tax payers' expense for the Wedding and Marriage of NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian and her fiancée Daryl Maguire. Gladys had decided to make the brazen gamble and defy public opinion. The Wedding was to be held in Centennial Park on Sunday 4th April at 10am, the Reception at 12 noon in the 'Big Brother' Channel 7 Production Studio at North Head, with the Honeymoon in Monte Carlo, Monaco. The whole jamboree was to be funded from the public purse following a bill being passed by both Houses of the NSW Parliament and unanimously supported by all political parties and independents. Special permission had been granted by the Federal Government for the Honeymooners overseas jaunt. All the polties were showing their appreciation for Gladys outstanding job in bouncing NSW out of the COVID-19 recession and making again NSW the State of Business! \$100 million was to be lavished on the festivities for the corporate love birds which would put in the shade the expenditure on the Royal Weddings and honeymoons. Funded from the current NSW Public Sector wage freeze and subsequent reduced cap on wage rises to 1.5% pa and even less! Pay rises Gladys claimed her Govt. could not afford and would threaten recovery from the recession. Even some 'spare cash' from the fund to help out the NSW Taxi Industry with Uber competition was syphoned for the Wedding expenses.

On the day before a cosy meeting of the love birds occurred in Gladys Parliamentary Office crammed with Maguire's cut price Australian Visa business files and piles of Council Grant documents awaiting shredding to make confetti for the Wedding to cut expenses, decided on the guest list and wedding protocol. It was to be a gala event for NSW Inc. They decided Guest of honour had to be Prime Minister ScoMo, Best Man would be Christian Porter 'lanky man about town' who would be in charge of holding the ring after the nuptials. Father of the Bride Substitute and in charge of walking Gladys down the aisle would be Mega Developer Harry Finger on the Trigger. Fittingly as Gladys Govt. has given his company so many cheap land handouts and clearances. Andrew Constance Minister for McFerryMcFerryFace would be Chief Privateer of honour. Bizarrely even staunch colourful ALP identities such as Eddie

Obeid and his sons were invited. They failed to turn up due to their ongoing court case. A surprise choice for Maid of Honour was Waverley bus depot boss, Sabrina. She was thrilled and delighted by the invitation and gladly volunteered to be all round chauffeur for a limousine in the motorcade. Transport bosses were in evidence on the guest list such as Clint Feuerherdt SeaLink/Transit Systems CEO, Daniela Fontana State Transit CEO, Suzanne Holden new Sydney Trains CEO and Pete Allaway NSW Trains CEO. Construction and developer heavy weights were on the guest list such as Lend Lease CEO Steve McCann and John Gandel of Gandel Group amongst others. Other corporate heavy weight guests included, Jennifer Westacott from the Business Council of Australia, Peter May CEO of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce and the list goes on. Even 'corporate' union bosses were on the invitation list such as Mark Morey Secretary of Unions NSW, Alex Claassens NSW State Secretary of the RTBU, Bus Division Secretary David Babineau, Richard Olsen NSW State Secretary of the TWU, amongst others. The union bosses had heard rumours on the grapevine of their invitations to the great event and had even been looking into an appropriate present such as a diamond studded dollar sign patterned belt for Gladys for helping them tighten the belts of NSW Public Sector workers. They had been touring depots, stations and sundry workplaces and had taken a keen interest in their members' waist lines. They had been shocked by the sight of so many expanding girths! The union bosses considered their members certainly needed going on an urgent 'health kick'. Thanks to Gladys caring initiatives they could now cut down on purchasing expensive fattening food! It was all a win, win situation! Even their CIA spook contacts chipped in some slush money for the glittering gift. Another guest was former Australia Post CEO Christine Holgate who had hinted to Gladys of a Cartier Watch wedding present. Big wigs from the gambling industry such a James Packer major owner of Crown Resorts and David Attenborough Tab Corp CEO also featured on the invitation list. Media bosses such as James Warburton 7 Network CEO and others were also on the guest list.



4th April 2021 'The Wedding'

As things began to warm up prior to the wedding ceremony amongst the roses in Bridal Avenue Centennial Park, the NSW and Australian corporate elite and their underlings were resplendent in expensive suits, skirts and fur coats. The RTBU officials and subordinates were particularly glittering in the new 'official' union uniform of epaulets, gold braid, stripes, with rows of 'secret' ALP medals for distinguished service and 'gallantry' in elections and EBA ballot rigging and 'discrete' corpulent brown paper envelope delivery for ALP slush funds on their chests, plumed hats with gold tassels and Morocco Leather belts emblazoned with the RTBU logo and even swords in their scabbards! At a previous union executive meeting Secre-

tary Claassens had thundered against the union T-Shirts and Eureka Flag Patches as too dowdy for professional union leaders and praised the glamorous new union uniform to the skies. “It was worth every dollar! Imagine I was invited to an ACTU Reception and Banquet for Albo at their HQ, wearing that T-Shirt. ACTU Royalty like Sally McManus wouldn’t allow me through the front door! I’d have to creep in via the ‘Tradesman’ entrance, and have to be a waiter and do the washing up! The ‘grandeur’ of the new uniforms would obviously raise the prestige of the ‘corporate’ union with the corporate elite and impress members who would see they were getting great value for their union dues which were soon having a 50% rise, unlike their wages! Some ‘stylish’ asbestos lined Union T-Shirts generously supplied by Sydney Trains would be available for grass roots members!”

However, things were getting hot for Transport Minister Constance. He suddenly spotted TWU NSW Secretary Olsen and some henchmen about to take a sandwich board listing various tempting, mouth watering TWU ‘Specials’ such as a permanent wage freeze and abolition of long service leave and bendi shift allowances for some not so discrete touting for business and even the TWU banner emblazoned with the logo ‘TWU Driving Privatisation in NSW’ for a photo opp, from the boot of the TWU limo! Constance frantically rushed forward and confronted them. Convincing Olsen, it was all too risqué for the gala event and forcing a retreat. Olsen whinged piteously, “Andrew, you’re a spoke in the wheels of private enterprise! Yet you’re so gung ho with privatisation!” Again Minister Constance had to move rapidly in damage control when ‘Queen’ Gladys attired in her dollar sign emblazoned wedding dress arrived. She was about to walk through a puddle when gallantly the two supremos from the rival unions, dramatically threw down their jackets over the puddle. Again Minister Constance had to rush in and prevent a riotous demarcation dispute between the corporate unionists. He was certainly earning his ministerial salary on the big day, in contrast to his routine laid back, secret weekly meetings with the transport union bosses.

Cardinal Pell with a handful of altar boys had flown in from the Vatican to hold the Wedding Service. After the vows were taken, pledges made ‘with fingers crossed’ that they would ‘honestly’ serve each other and service ended, Gladys and her husband attired in a tuxedo followed by Maid of Honour Sabrina, other bride maids, started walking through the jubilant crowd and a ‘guard of honour’ provided by the RTBU officials with raised swords with the ‘cut price’ confetti raining down. Suddenly all hell looked to be unleashed! A team of AFP officers investigating on behalf of ICAC, the NSW Council Grants rorts, burst into the crowd. They yelled “Freeze! This is an Australian Federal Police raid!” They then tried to confiscate the confetti! ScoMo had to intervene and save the day. Forcing the heavily armed AFP squad to back off and return to their cars.

After the near fiasco of the Wedding, the bridal party and guests caught the latest ferry in the fleet supplied by Transport Minister Andrew McFerryMcFerryFace from Circular Quay to Manly. The Bridal Party and guests were picked up at Manly Wharf by a motorcade led by Sabrina and raced to Nth Head for the reception. Sabrina was gunning the engine of her limo with an ear glued to her mobile and a ciggie tightly clenched between her teeth, as she ran red lights and blocked intersections to meet tight running times of the wedding timetable. Even picking up a police escort, Sabrina had initially thought was all arranged by Gladys for the

motorcade, but turned out the cops seemed just excited by her display of advanced Kamikaze driving skills. However they suddenly took a dim view of her mobile usage and booked her. She had no time for layovers. She was desperate to reach the reception venue dead on time!

‘The Wedding Reception’

After the motorcade screeched to a halt at the venue, the wedding crowd piled in for the reception festivities. To supply some entertainment Jamie Packer chipped in with one of his too many unused roulette wheels together with laundry bags of cash from Crown Casino as a wedding gift. The Pubs and Clubs Association provided rigged poker machines which as per usual will provide very little winnings. Lion Group lavishly supplied a wide range of alcoholic beverages. Other gurus of extreme profits also pitched in with various savoury, alcoholic and gambling offerings. A merry time was had by all with even dancing on the tables. The Darlinghurst based ‘Touch of Class’ establishment even pitched in and supplied scantily



clad ‘management consultants’ who were busily orchestrating a wild orgy of gambling in a side room and demonstrations of innovative techniques of naked profiteering in another. They distributed raunchy images of ‘gig economy’ obscene profiteering to further excite the corporate revellers. Some ultra risqué imagery followed of ACTU Secretary Sally McManus and other union bosses caught stripping off their flimsy, see through ‘corporate union’ modesty and engaged in outrageous lap dancing with the Libs and corporate heavy weights, brazenly trampling on workers’ wages and conditions. Then shar-

ing a Covid recessionary bonding collective nude mud bath with much hi jinks, as “We are all in this together!”

Suddenly the wild partying came to an abrupt halt, when Gladys was about to give her wedding speech and a surprise guest of international renown showed up. It was Donald Trump, former US President of all people! He had flown in on his private Lear Jet. Trump gave Gladys a big sloppy kiss. He expressed delight with the corporate fortunes of NSW Inc. and how Gladys showed corporate leadership when she pressed her iron stiletto heel on NSW public sector workers with the Wage Freeze and Reduced Wage Rise Cap.

With her big bright smile, Gladys gave her speech along the lines that her corporate cohorts will come through the COVID recession troubles and make NSW again the State of Business. At the end of her speech, she quipped that the ‘No Bonking Ban’ will definitely not apply on her honeymoon! Instead of throwing a posy to bridesmaids she raised her wedding dress and pulled down a garter which she threw to them. Clover Moore, Sydney Lord Mayor was the lucky lady who caught it. A helicopter whisked the newly hitched couple to the airport where they caught a specially chartered Lear Jet at NSW tax payers’ expense. Finally Mr and Mrs Maguire flew off to their Honeymoon destination. Greed has been good!

SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What are your impressions of the timetable changes coming into effect from 25th Oct.?

Burwood Driver: Some of the most significant changes include the elimination of the 436, 439, M10 routes and the 461 being made express and a night service. So we have now the 461X and 461N. In the case of the 461X significant parts of the route are now express and not stopping at many previous 461 stops. There seems quite a bit of confusion amongst commuters and likely anger with the changes. When drivers do the new 461 route, they see many commuters waving to stop but have to ignore them and continue on the route. The 461X is now starting at Riley St. Darlinghurst and the 461X starts from Castlereagh St. in the city. These changes strike me as another example of mad corner cutting to save money at the expense of commuters. Behind the scenes the route changes seem to be in part about stealing work from ex-STA drivers on the RTBU EBA higher pay rate and giving it to the new drivers who are particularly TWU members on the lower rate of pay due to the TWU EBA. In the case of Burwood Depot 20 lines of work have been stolen from the ex-STA drivers, whilst at Leichhardt there has been 30 or so lines of work stolen from ex-STA drivers. At Burwood, the AM shifts have not been affected, however the PM shifts have been targeted for the cut-backs in lines of work. Other news is that the BOTs (Driver Instructors) are being taken off training new drivers and put back on the road doing normal shifts. Whilst Transit Systems management is still refusing to negotiate with the RTBU for a new EBA for the ex-STA drivers. The RTBU officials have gone to the Fair Work Court over the issue with a hearing to be held in coming weeks.

WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What is the latest at the depot?

WB: The bosses are continuing to hold regular fortnightly BBQs. Madam Lash continues on the rampage sacking more drivers, mainly the older drivers. Consequently, the depot has a high turnover of drivers and currently a driver shortage. Other news is the addition of electric buses to the fleet. They are farce. Whilst on the cards is a new general uniform for all drivers in Sydney Buses to be introduced shortly.

Sparks: What are your thoughts on the case of the Kingsgrove Transit Systems driver who was convicted in late October of dangerous driving causing the death of two people on a motor bike?

WB: The driver was caught red handed on the CCTV using his mobile when he rear ended the motor bike causing the accident and fatalities. He has been convicted of 2 counts of dangerous

driving occasioning death. This incident tells a tale. Don't use your mobile on the road. Don't run red lights. It spotlights that not enough emphasis is being put into driver training by the bosses. Driver safety is paramount. Strictness on safety is being allowed to go down the slot. It points to driver training in Transit Systems being relegated to a lower priority and lack of follow up by Driver Instructors. Driver training and the emphasis on safety has certainly been eroded since I first came on the job.

Sparks: What are your impressions of the Berejiklian Govt's latest expressway developments?

WB: Recently I was driving along one of these 'Roads to El Dorado' the M8. It cost me \$8 and goes 8 km 's from Gardeners Road in Alexandria and ending at Hurstville. It connects up with the M5 and has the look of a part of a Mechano Set. It's another waste of Govt. revenue. It would have cost billions on bitumen and concrete. For me a complete waste of money. It's another white elephant. I noticed few motorists were using it. There was only one entry and exit. What happens if a fire, chemical spillage or gas release occurs in it? It's a road to a dead end. It's certainly won't alleviate the traffic congestion problem in Sydney. The more roads you get, the more congestion you get. The money spent on the project would be much better spent on public transport improvements such new train lines and services.



Another recently completed expressway tunnel is on the Nth Shore. The Govt. has made it compulsory for truck drivers to use it, costing each truckie \$23 to \$25. Interestingly, when the East-West tunnel was completed years ago under an ALP Govt, motorists were being coerced to use it. The Liberal Opposition complained about the anti-competitive aspect and forced the Govt. to back down. How come the Berejiklian Govt. is allowed to get away with this 'anti-competitive' measure?

Sparks: What are your impressions of the recent wildcat strike by nurses at Blacktown Hospital?

WB: They took 24 hour strike action over staff shortages and associated safety issues. Next day the Fair Work Court intervened and threatened the Nurses Union with heavy fines if the nurses continued with the action. As a result the officials of the Nurses Union pressured the nurses to return to work. This action by the Fair Work Court jeopardises a fundamental right of workers to take strike action over safety issues.

Promises! Promises! Promises!

Sparks: What are your thoughts on latest developments in the Taxi Industry?

WB: On a commercial TV Channel News program on 8/12/20, there was a report that from the \$142 Mill. collected by the NSW Govt. to supposedly help out the Taxi Industry hard hit by Uber competition, only \$42 Mill. was passed on. The funds were raised from a \$1 surcharge on taxi and drive share trips. This is a fine example of how the Liberal Govt. operates. It's just the tip of the iceberg. What happened to the \$100 Mill. collected?

LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS

Sparks: What are your impressions of the impact of the time table changes as of 25/10/20?

Leichhardt Busie: We have noticed much anger amongst commuters concerning the changes such as the changes to the 438 with the introduction of the new 438x limited stops run particularly with the oldies. We have lost the M10 and M50 which were culled and particularly involved the bendi buses. Now the bendi fleet at the depot has been reduced by 50%. Particularly the ex-STA drivers have been hard hit losing lines of work. The bosses have introduced the new 437 and 502 runs but these runs seem poorly patronised. Coming up in December the bosses are planning a big push to displace the old time ex-STA drivers from their rosters. Costing these drivers big cuts in their wages. The bosses will be giving these rosters to the new drivers who are TWU members on a lower rate of pay. These new drivers have preference on rosters allocation where available. Despite this preferential treatment, the bosses are unable to keep the new drivers as they can't cope with the job and there continues to be high turnover of them.

Sparks: What has been the latest with management with Transit Systems?

Leichhardt Driver: Some of the most significant developments have been Jamie Sinclair who in a previous corporate life was general manager of State Transit, transferred over to Transit Systems with their takeover of Region 6 as a consultant has now become general manager of Transit Systems. In recent months, we had a visit from the new owner, the head of Sea Link, which now owns Transit Systems. There was a serious breach of procedures associated with COVID-19 prevention associated with his visit. Under these procedures we are issued with masks and made to wear them in the depot and have a temperature check. Whilst now we can only enter the depot building via the parking area. The new owner refused to comply with these procedures but was allowed by depot management to enter the depot building and have a full run of the place. This incident glaringly shows management's double standards on COVID-19 issues.

Sparks: What are your impressions of the 25th October timetable and route changes?

LD: There have been big changes affecting many Inner West routes we have been particularly hard hit with the culling of the M10 and M50. Particularly ex-STA drivers have been hard hit with the loss of 30 or so lines of work.

VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

In this issue of Sparks Drivers Conductors and Head Office staff will discuss current issues in V/Line. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.

Sparks: What is the current situation at V/Line?

Archie: The Chief Executive has been stood down.

Rastus: He is being investigated by the Corruption Commission.

Roscoe: We do not know what it is about but Drivers are glad he is stood down. He tried to wreck our current EBA in 2018 which was defeated in a Ballot of V/Line employees. It will be revealed at the Inquiry.

Sparks: Last issue mention was made of EBA negotiations. What is the current situation?

Forsyth: Negotiations have been included with a satisfactory outcome to employees. The union delegates have worked hard to achieve the outcome. It will be written up in the union journal.

Abner: Unfortunately non unionists will get the rise. It makes us sick that these scabs get the rises, yet the rises were fought hard by the union.

Sparks: With COVID-19 and Victoria's hard lockdowns, what is the situation regarding public transport?

Archie: With the exception of Friday and Saturday night services, all public transport is running to a full service.

Penelope: With V/Line, all trains and bus services are operating but no services are crossing the New South Wales and South Australian Borders.

Sparks: What is the situation with the Albury Line?

Roscoe: V/Line has replaced all Albury line services with buses from Melbourne to Wodonga. The XPT terminates at Albury.

Sparks: Why haven't the V/Line trains run to Wodonga?

Rastus: When the broad gauge was converted to standard gauge, no provision was made to terminate trains at Benalla, Wangaratta and Wodonga.

Roscoe: No Safe Working provisions were made in Safe Working at these locations to do locomotive run arounds. When the current Border Lockdowns were made it was proposed to send the trains empty cars to Albury to run around but the NSW Govt. rejected the proposal. For example if an equipment fault happens North of Wangaratta then all passenger trains are replaced by buses from Melbourne. This may change when Velocity trains are introduced on the line. When the line was converted to Standard Gauge no one thought about installing loops to run around at these locations. At these stations the loops were five km's with no run around loops.

Sparks: Have any V/Line employees been stood down?

Forsyth: At the moment No. There are no catering facilities on the trains and catering staff at Southern Cross have been redeployed in Customer Service roles. As for the Catering Manager. He has been moved to Head Office as he is working from home.

Abner: Catering may return to the trains with time table changes in December in a limited capacity.

Archie: Employees are working a basic 36 hour fortnight. At least compared to other industries we are working. I know people who have been stood down since March who have received nothing. Not even JobKeeper.

These people are on Tourist Visas. Some employers have used the COVID-19 as an excuse to reduce staff.

Forsyth: The current situation is conductors are running trains but they are not checking tickets due to OH&S. One manager tried to force conductors to check tickets but due to tougher lockdowns this instruction was never enforced. Police and Protective Service offices check trains at random to check travel permits and non essential travel. Employees have to carry a permit to show they are travelling to work.

Sparks: What is the situation at Southern Cross?

Penelope: Human Resources are still assigned to monitor employees.

Sparks: Are they still using these clowns?

Penelope: Yes they are and if the employee has to front a manager on certain issues this individual from Human Resources is always there.

Roscoe: This is intimidation. Years ago Human Resources only appeared if the issue was serious. Haven't the managers got the guts to tell these individuals to get lost?

Rastus: No they are still weak and employees are still being terminated on the last day of the six months probation period.

Archie: The Union says they cannot intervene if it is a probation period but if employees stick together this may be prevented. The only difference is Human Resources are doing the terminations and not the managers. They move quickly and other employees do not know until it has happened. If the employees discuss the issue, managers try to stand over them. Most employees think there could be a Court Challenge. We can only wait.

Sparks: What is the story of the employee who was injured in an accident due to the incompetence of a manager?



Moose: This happened eighteen months ago. There had been a storm and due to a fault the Ballarat line was shut down.

Forsyth: The Ballarat line was later reopened but the rostered employees were out of position. The manager on duty decided to send the conductor who was to run the train from Ballarat in a taxi to run this train.

Moose: The taxi proceeded up the Western Highway to Ballarat and the taxi was hit by a car



travelling in the wrong lane of the freeway causing serious injury to both the taxi driver and the conductor. The driver who drove on the wrong lane was killed in the accident.

Archie: The conductor spent time in hospital and has returned to work on light duties.

Forsyth: With proper planning by the manager, the Ballarat depot could have covered the duty and the conductor could have been changed over along the line. If no Conductor was available at Ballarat then use one of the station staff as in an emergency.

Penelope: With the employee being on light duties, we hope V/Line will offer the employee another position.

Rastus: We don't know what V/line has planned but other employees who have been injured at work over the years. V/Line has said no position exists except their original classification and they have been paid out as medically unfit.

Once again we have run out of space. The employee who was injured in the freak accident on the Western Freeway should be retrained in another duty within V/Line. The only good point for V/Line is that no employee has been stood down due to COVID.

Rastus and Roscoe: In having the final say, V/Line should look at its rostering during service disruptions and as for Human Resources: let the managers run the department. Finally we will repeat what we have said in previous issues of Sparks. If you are called in by a manager and if Human Resources are in attendance – walk out!

Stop Press

“As of 28/10/20 the Chief Executive of V/Line James Pinder was sacked over cleaning contracts at V/Line. Pinder admitted at an IBAC (Area Based Anti-Corruption Commission) Inquiry he and the cleaning manager at Metro Trains had accepted kickbacks from a cleaning contractor so as the company could keep this contract. Pinder tried to say the money was won in a betting syndicate. But when questioned by IBAC, he admitted it was a kickback. The cleaning contractor's contract was also terminated on the same day. Details in the next edition of Sparks”. Pinder was dismissed and Metro Trains sacked its cleaning manager. The cleaning contract with Transclean was cancelled

In this issue of Sparks we will be discussing privatisation of public transport in Victoria and other Australian States. Railway workers and Bus Drivers will discuss these issues. As in previous issues of Sparks names have been changed.

Rastus: We will discuss State Transit. State Transit is the oldest Government provider of street public transport in NSW as well as Australia. Its predecessors have provided public transport in Sydney since 1879. Originally it was a branch of the NSW Railways. Later the NSW Railways established tramways in Newcastle, Broken Hill and Maitland.

Roscoe: There were two Private Tramways in Sydney. One at Rockdale which was a steam tramway which ran from Government House Sales to a wharf at Duck River. This line operated a seven day a week service, but towards the end of 1962 abandonment was announced. The line closed in 1963. It was privately owned till the end. Ironically the new Parramatta light rail is to be built on part of its route.

Sparks: Was Privatisation of the tramway system considered?

Montague: In the 1880's a number of times the Government considered franchising the Sydney Tramways to Private Enterprise. Due to public backlash the franchising was defeated in Parliament.

Taylor: The word Privatisation was not heard of until the early 1980's. In 1926 the tramways in Broken Hill, Maitland and some Sydney tramlines were abandoned and replaced by private buses.

Clyde: These abandonments were due to interested bus competition with the issue becoming political. In 1931 legislation was introduced which co-ordinated bus services and eliminated bus routes duplicating tram routes. Some tramway and railway lines were closed.

Roscoe: In 1930 the NSW Railways lost control of the Tramways. A Trust was set up to operate Trams in Sydney and Newcastle. In 1932 this Trust became the D, RT and T. From 1932 onwards Private Bus operations were taken over by the Government with the first bus route being the 144 service from St. Leonards to Manly. There were other takeovers of private bus operations which evolved into the current STA. From 1937 to 1961 Govt. buses replaced Sydney trams.

Clyde: It is ironic that the STA's predecessors were set up by the Liberal Country Party Government during the 1930's and now it is a Liberal Country Party Govt. which is destroying State Transit.

Sparks: When were Government and Local Government Transport Operations established in other States?

Rastus: Victoria: Melbourne in 1905, Geelong 1930, Ballarat and Bendigo in 1934. South Australia, Adelaide 1907, Tasmania, Launceston 1911, Hobart 1913, Western Australia, Fremantle 1905, Perth 1913, Kalgoorlie 1962, Queensland: Rockhampton 1909, Brisbane 1923, Australian Territories: Canberra 1927, Darwin 1950. In the above cities with few exceptions services before these dates were operated by Private Companies.

Sparks: When did Private Operation of Government Transport commence?

Roscoe: It was happening on the Victorian Railways from early days. Services were abandoned. From 1934 when Co-ordinated Transport was established in Victoria. If the Victorian Railways wanted to abandon a Rail Service they applied to the Transport Regulation Board who would issue a licence to a local bus operator to run the service. After 1958 Pensioner Concessions were introduced in Victoria. They only applied to the Government operator. Private bus operators did not offer any Pensioner Concessions.

Clyde: The first operation to be abandoned after Pensioner Concessions were introduced was when the Victorian Railways abandoned operations from St. Kilda to Brighton. Staff from this operation were redeployed to other sections of the Railways. A licence was issued to a Private Operator who had to operate the service seven days a week. There were no Pensioner Concessions.

Roscoe: By the 1970's the replacement of Country Rail Services was becoming a political issue so the Railway Management came up with another idea.

Sparks: What was that idea?

Rastus: The Railways replaced the Country Services with replacement services let out to tender. Rail Fares and Concessions would be available on these services. This system was introduced from 1976 onwards and concluded in 1994.

Clyde: Some Railway Managers were alleged to have said that the Contracted Service would after two years be offered to the Contractor to operate. If the Contractor refused, the Railways would put an application to the TAB to abandon the service.

Sparks: Has any service been abandoned?

Taylor: A few have gone but most services are still operating. To abandon these services would be Political Suicide. A Public Inquiry would have to be held as these Bus services are still considered Rail Services.

Sparks: What about Train Services?

Montague: Tram Services operated by the Tramways Board which were abandoned were replaced by Buses operated by the Tramways Board.

Clyde: Services in Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo were operated by the State Electricity Commission of Victoria. This Department was forced to operate Tram Services. This came about in Victoria from 1919 to 1952 which had a minority Government. The issue in these cities is political. By 1966 Geelong Tramways were abandoned and replaced by Private Buses.

Montague: Ballarat and Bendigo survived until 1971 and 1972. By then the systems were worn out. In 1968 the SEC introduced a Bill into State Parliament to Abandon the Tramways. The Government did not control the Upper House so the Bill was thrown out. One of the reasons the Bill was thrown out was due to Pensioner Concessions. Ballarat and Bendigo Tramways had Pensioner Concessions. There was no Pensioner Concessions in Geelong.

Taylor: The Government gained control of the Upper House after the 1970 State Election and the Bill was passed. One of the Conditions was that the SEC subsidised Pensioner Concessions for three years. This was until 1974.

What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic Unionism means grass roots controlled unionism, not control by officials. It also means that workers in one industry should be in one union so as to remove artificial divisions that can cause disunity. Such a union should be fully organised and controlled by the membership.

To achieve this we believe a union should be organised along the following lines:

1. That no person employed by the union should earn more than the average income of the membership.
2. The Spokespeople should have no executive power - all decisions should be made by the union membership in the course of mass meetings.
3. Spokespeople are only to act as delegates elected by the membership to carry out decisions made by the membership in mass meetings.
4. That a mechanism is instituted for the instant recall of spokespeople/delegates who break the above rules.
5. That all positions within the union be held on a limited tenure, the duration of which will be decided by the membership.
6. That a programme of decentralised decision-making be implemented within the union structure, so that we won't need full time officials.
7. All loss of earnings incurred by elected delegates who miss work as a result of carrying out union duties will be reimbursed by the union to the extent of the lost wages.

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

Continued From Page 19 Montague: This only delayed the Day of Reckoning and as October 1974 approached the Government introduced subsidised Pensioner Concessions on all Private Bus Operators in Victoria. From 1976 Private Buses received a Government Subsidy.

Sparks: Sadly we have run out of space. In the next issue we will discuss further Bus Privatisations in Australia.

Continued From Page 2 tions are \$5 per year. Please make out postal notes to Rebel Worker. Sparks is published by the Sydney Network for Democratic Unionism.

Rank and File First are running a campaign based on a petition which is circulating, that calls for a vote of no confidence in RTBU NSW Secretary Alex Claassens. Digitally sign the petition here: '<http://forms.gle/6NydMdUzda7eoAuz9>'. See PDF of the petition attached to this bulletin. Return completed petitions at 'rankandfilefirst@outlook.com'.

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