

No.131

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# Sparks

THE RANK-AND-FILE TRANSPORT WORKERS' PAPER

**REES NSW GOVT & RAILCORP BOSSES  
PLAN JOB DESTRUCTION BLITZ KREIG -  
ONLY DIRECT ACTION CAN HALT THIS  
JACK BOOTED ONSLAUGHT!**



Central News

STA Busie News

Victorian Rail News

Transit Officers

International News

Train Crew News

Sydney Wharfies' News

STA Restructure

Bus Camera Uproar

STA Bosses at the Carnival

## **EDITORIAL**

Welcome to another edition of Sparks.

This edition of Sparks explodes a flare over Rail Corp exposing important moves the bosses and the Rees ALP NSW Govt. are making behind the scenes to launch a new push for restructuring of the railways for privatisation and the associated massive elimination of jobs and new waves of speedups. Rather than taking any effective action to assist the grass roots to fight this savage attack, the union hierarchy is wasting union dues on the hiring of financial analysts. (See article page 3) Networking on the job to form committees to resist the onslaught which could link up with similar committees in stations, depots and offices is a vital priority.

In State Transit, some of the most important news has been the grass roots upsurge against the bus cameras and their role in disciplinary action against drivers. Whilst the union executive played a despicable role in caving into management's policy for the cameras with only the former delegate from Pt. Botany Depot voting against the brazen sell out at a union executive meeting, now the union hierarchy is deceitfully giving the impression in the media and elsewhere that its opposed to management's policy regarding the cameras. (See article Page 8) Only direct action will achieve a non-punitive policy for the bus cameras.

While many have been working hard over the Xmas and New Year's period, a Sparks "James Bond" slipped down to Rio in Brazil at the bosses' expense and infiltrated some frolicking of the STA bosses and their mates at the New Year's Eve Rio Carnival. With the aid of the new fangled Sparks digital camera, we provide some intriguing snaps and tales of their antics..... (See article page 7)



Sparks welcomes contribution by transport workers in the shape of articles, cartoons, poems. Please send to PO Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW or via our web page [www.sparksweb.org](http://www.sparksweb.org)

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## **SPARKS WEB PAGE -**

## **[www.sparksweb.org](http://www.sparksweb.org)**

## N.S.W. RAIL NEWS

### **Sparks: How is staffing at Central lately?**

Station Assistant: The bosses are continuing on their push in regard to ensuring short staffing of the lower grade positions. However they continue to ensure safety related positions are still covered such as the flag jobs on the platforms. They are of course ensuring that all management positions are well covered. At Central they have even created a new management position which just leeches off the other management jobs.

### **REES ALP NSW GOVT & RAIL CORP BOSSES PLAN BLITZKREIG!**

### **Sparks: What's happening with the NSW Govt and the bosses' plans for railway reforms?**

SA: Wheels are turning behind the scenes for a massive assault on jobs in the railways in NSW associated with its restructuring for privatisation. In line with these plans, there is much shuffling of low level management personnel throughout the network particularly involving the sudden appearance of young station managers at many stations. In typical neo-liberal style, particularly targeted for elimination in this onslaught, will be the low level jobs. Small teams of workers will take over these jobs working multiple rosters on different locations. Whilst private contractors on low wages and poor conditions will also be employed.

As part of this agenda, train crew jobs will be eliminated in a phased process. I recently spoke with a cleaner who mentioned that he saw an important component of this plan. He saw new train carriages with cameras located at all the doorways. So the plan will be to eliminate the guard job and operate the train via DOO (Driver Only Operation) involving these cameras. Further down the track, train drivers' jobs will be eliminated as the trains will be operated by super control signal boxes which have already been constructed in various locations.

### **Sparks: What has been the reaction of the union hierarchy to this looming Blitz Kreig?**

SA: They have employed financial consultants to make an assessment of the railways to show that the bosses' planned massive job cuts are not cost effective. A similar approach was taken by the union hierarchy toward Freight Corp prior to its privatisation. The union employed some university economists who wrote a report which effectively rubber stamped Freight Corp for privatisation and also intimidated workers from taking industrial action to resist it. The whole privatisation move has turned out to be a big scam with Corrigan, the CEO of Pacific National which gobbled up Freight Corp, retiring with an \$8 million bonus, whilst over 5 years the company has only made \$1 million in profits. The big question is, should the Rees Govt. reject the union consultants' report, what will be the union hierarchy's fallback position? If Rees holds off from the big onslaught, will the union wait until the Liberals achieve power in NSW and proceed with the Blitz Kreig? At that time workers will be obliged to take

industrial action and lose wages to save their jobs. As of March of this year, we will receive the final 2nd 4% pa EBA wage rise. What will be the union's approach be to the next EBA?

**Sparks: What have been the outcomes of the election of the Rudd ALP Govt?**

SA: One aspect is that those who played a key role in assisting Rudd's electoral campaign have been rewarded with positions in the staffs of Federal ALP back benchers. Unlike the staffs of front benchers, they are unlikely to lose their jobs in the event that the Liberals regain power at the next elections.

**Sparks: What's the latest with the Transit Officers?**

SA: The latest news is that they are being issued with a change of uniform. They are being given new shirts so as to make them appear more passenger friendly. Whilst recruitment for the jobs has ceased. If this is because of the Xmas and New Year period, I'm unsure. In the railways, the Transit Officers give the impression of being a law unto themselves. Whilst even Station Managers have little control over them. They are also not focusing adequately on their role of providing safety on trains. This fact became apparent recently, when a kid was killed on a train and there was no intervention by Transit Officers. It would be better for passenger safety that the security guards were returned with regular patrols of trains.

## **RailCorp Bosses Still "Mad" for Station Reform**

*By Crimson Coconut*

Kevin Rudd's bleated to the State Premiers that they should do everything in their power to preserve jobs during this acute stage of the ongoing capitalist crisis. RailCorp management however have ignored reality and are pushing ahead with their rationalist agenda for rail stations.

Their proposal has been knocked on the head many times in the past 10 years when it has been presented in its various guises. Some guises that immediately come to mind are "Customer Service Management Proposal", "Station Reform" and "Multi Station Control". RailCorp are still flogging the same dead horse called Station Reform that has been rejected as a solution by station staff and is very unpopular with RailCorp customers. The chances of the latest reform attempt succeeding seems hopeless due to presentation during the latest financial crisis.

While no redundancy provisions have been promised out of the proposal, 50 full time rosters are to be replaced by 50 extra part-time positions. This is a worrying trend to part time work that needs to be resisted whenever it occurs.

CSA1's will be replaced with cleaners from Presentation Services who are paid at a much reduced rate. It is envisaged that there will be 100 "surplus" (their words) CSA1's, some of whom will be offered positions as CSA2's or continue in their current roles until they are reduced by natural attrition. This seems a short sighted proposal as it ignores the multi-skilled nature of the CSA1's who can be utilised in many more areas than cleaning. They already perform such duties as crowd control, train dispatching duties (safeworking), customer ser-

vice, ticketing gate array duties, customer information and any other duties deemed necessary by their superiors. Presentation Services staff on the other hand have had minimal training and will be expected to primarily carry out cleaning duties.

Under the proposals an extra 20 stations would operate unattended creating an increase of 58 additional stations operated as "multi control", while others will have reduced hours and/or no staff on weekends. The number of station managers would be reduced from 203 down to 145. Ticket selling Salespersons will only be retained if they are able to demonstrate that they can sell 120-180 tickets per hour.

Commuters who now line up in peak hour at their local station ticket window are already frustrated by the wait. If the reforms come to fruition they will find that they will be further delayed at the ticket vending machines which take much longer to serve them. It is doubtful whether the vending machines would have a throughput of more than 120 tickets per hour anyway, which makes the criteria for cutting jobs all the more ludicrous. Beside this, Salespersons do far more than just sell tickets. They provide more customer service than most of the other positions on stations, this includes giving passenger directions and detailed train running information, something a vending machine would find impossible to do.

Because staff at ticket barriers are being reduced from 2 to 1 person, it places the person on the ticket gate array at greater risk of assault from passengers and increases their stress levels due to the proposed reduction of other station staff who usually provide customer service and information.

At a time when there has been the biggest jump in passenger numbers in NSW rail - at a time when safety and security will become more important due to the financial crisis - when keeping people in work will help ameliorate the worst aspects of the downturn - when ticket prices have increased at least twice as much as the wage rise granted to rail workers for their efforts each year - when no pay rise is to be granted as compensation for the extra work value of the reforms - when corruption and waste consumes RailCorp from the boardroom down to those at the coalface - at a time when climate change will necessitate irrevocable change in the way we live and travel - at a time when NSW Labor is on the nose because working people reject their neo-liberal agenda - it is just madness for RailCorp to continue down the reform road for unproven and unsound ideological reasons.

Although the reforms are unlikely to succeed in the current climate we cannot rest on our laurels and must be prepared to defend our conditions. It is policies like these that have placed us in the current economic, social and ecological mess.. However we have a better chance than usual to have the proposal reversed.

Start a campaign at your station to discuss with customers and your work colleagues the impact of the proposed reforms. Help distribute educational leaflets to customers and staff to prepare them for a battle against the station reforms.

Union elections are presently taking place. Union members and others should get some guarantees from candidates that the reforms be rejected in total by them before you give them your vote. Better still, stand and elect representatives in your local work area that are opposed to, and will work toward getting rid of the reforms, forever.

## **Sleep Research – New Dangers for Shift Workers**

*by Crimson Coconut*

I've pushed the shift-work barrow before, citing our miserly penalty rates for working shift-work and the devastating effects of sleep deprivation on our health. But the evidence is now rolling in to support the claims that shift work and the inevitable sleep deprivation resulting has many catastrophic effects on our body and mind.

The American Cancer Society has done research into sleep and the effects of sleep debt. According to them the 1984 the median level of sleep of a sample group of people was 8 hours. Life has sped up so much since then that today the sample group is getting a median sleep of just 6.7 hours, a decrease of 15%. According to researchers this is a perilous situation that leads to premature death and poor health.

Researchers working with rats on an experiment in sleep deprivation found that after just 5 days without sleep all of the rats that were kept awake died. They concluded that sleep is just as important as food for the body's well being.

Partial sleep debt is also not to be dismissed too lightly. Its effects are cumulative, each additional day of sleep deprivation adds an additional impediment to well being. Just 4 hours of missed sleep can be measured to cause significant deterioration in cognition and memory as well as physiological changes to the body's metabolism.

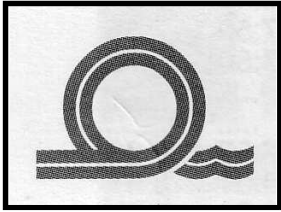
Missing 1 night of sleep worsens the ability to memorise as much as 40% of information. Sleep is not just for rest of the body but plays an important role in keeping us fit and well. More research is going on in this area of evolutionary adaptation and why sleep is so necessary. One finding was that our memory will return or improve after a good nights sleep. It is more beneficial to have an early night before an exam rather than staying up cramming your studies into the wee small hours. Lack of sleep severely effects our cognitive performance.

Virginia Tech Transportation Institute in the US point out the dangers of driving when drowsy because of sleep debt. While we may feel OK to drive, the dangers are all too real. After wiring up several volunteers they were able to detect that they all experienced some form of micro sleep while at the wheel. Micro sleeps were a major contributor to road accidents and to road deaths. A 2 second micro sleep, which can go undetected was enough to put a driver into the next lane on the freeway. After 4 seconds of micro sleep they would be off the road.

Major accidents that could be attributed to sleep deficit include the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown, Three Mile Island nuclear accident and the Staten Island Ferry disaster. We simply believe that it OK to go without sleep, in the modern world its a "badge of honor" not to sleep. Research now proves that this is a foolish belief.

The University of Chicago School of Medicine has researched the effects of sleep deprivation on the human body. Using many healthy volunteers who were deprived of sleep for 4 hours each day over a total of 6 days they found that this was enough to put the volunteers into a pre-diabetic state because they had a decreased ability to metabo-

*See Page 23*



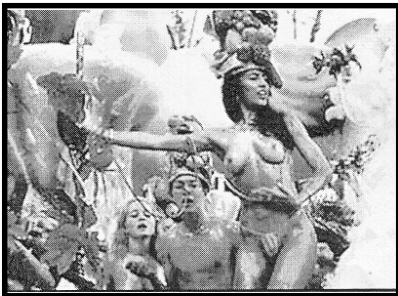
## Sparks joins the State Transit Corporate Contingent at the Rio New Years Eve Carnival!

Recently a Sparks reporter attended an International Transport Conference held in Rio De Janiero in Brazil following being supplied with an invitation from a quiet achiever at Strawberry Hills. The first class flights to the conference and luxury 5 star Hotel accommodation enjoyed by Australian transport bosses from State Transit and RailCorp, and their friends were funded by the recent public transport fare increases. All the corporate heavies and their cronies from the conference trooped off to the Carnival held on New Year's Eve. Where everyone comes disguised in flamboyant and bizarre outfits and participates in high performance and risqué salsas, congas and tangos.

Our Sparks reporter also came along to the Carnival, disguised as the State Transit CEO, attired in a G-String and the upper part of a pin stripe suit tastefully decorated with swasti-



*The Boss of Cab Charge  
& West Bus*



*Some raunchy STA executives in the mood for some "lap dancing" with the union executive before the "stripper" performance.*

kas and dollar signs and expansionist fake plastic waistline. He was also equipped with a concealed digital "candid" camera remarkably similar to the new bus cameras to capture highlights of the corporate revels for grassroots enlightenment. Before he knew it, our reporter was soon introduced by the NSW Transport Minister attired as "The Monster which destroyed NSW Public Transport" who had also tagged along to the festivities, to a most corpulently corporate dance partner. Our reporter was soon dancing cheek to cheek with the boss of Cabcharge and Westbus also wearing a G-String and fake boobs decorated in the popular dollar sign motif, who had a roving eye for the profitable bulges in the STA CEO's corporate physique.

A group of STA depot managers were also snapped by our spy's digital camera, wearing swastika laden sequins, with dollar bills rolled up in their suspenders and gleaming 3rd Reich jack boots merrily engaged in the State Transit corner cutting conga goose step.

Lo and behold! In a discrete and "shady" corner, members of the union executive were also observed at the festivities, through a haze of smoke and mirrors and cascades of fake dollar bills and raucous wolf whistles from merry STA executives, engaging in a particularly risqué sizzling stripper performance! Apparently as a trial run for our next enterprise agreement negotiations!



*STA Depot managers networking about the next corner to cut*

## S.T.A. BUSIE NEWS

### WAVERLEY DEPOT NEWS

#### **Sparks: What's happening with the bus cameras?**

Waverley Busie: The bus cameras have become a sizzling issue at Waverley, Randwick and other depots lately. Recently a driver from Randwick was sacked apparently following a passenger making a complaint that he had gone through a red light and the incident being caught on bus camera footage. As a result, at the time, a move was made to carry out a big wildcat strike due to drivers anger over the sacking. However this move was narrowly foiled. We are particularly angry in regard to how the STA and the bosses with the sleazy compliance of the union executive have brazenly defied a guarantee that we were given, when the bus cameras were initially introduced, that the cameras were not be used in disciplinary actions against us.

In regard to the role of the cameras in helping to curb trouble makers and fare evaders on buses, there is quite a break down in regard to coordination between the STA and the police. I was recently speaking to an ex-Waverley bus driver who is now a police officer who is an acquaintance of mine. He mentioned that despite there being camera footage of such incidents, the police often are unable to take any action. Particularly contributing to this situation is STA policy that we are not supposed to wait for the police after an incident and are to proceed along the route. Consequently, when the police are called they lack witnesses and the incident is too long ago and blurred in witness's minds to get accurate information to lay charges and pursue a case in court. The STA certainly doesn't regard the trouble we have with problem passengers as a big issue. Do we have to have a serious incident before decisive action is taken on the issue? Clear guidelines need to be developed by the STA on how problem passengers,





outside elements such as gangs of kids who are under 17 years of age and so are often let off the hook by the legal system and associated incidents of harassment and violence are treated.

**Sparks: What's happening with the union?**

WB: Recently there was quite a brazen move by the bosses to undermine the union presence at the depot. Without any explanation or warning, they suddenly removed the existing union notice board from its very central location and transferred it to a quite obscure location, which few know about, on the southern end of the Waverley Depot admin offices. This notice board is open to everyone to put up notices or flyers on issues of concern to them. In the place where it was previously located, a management notice board was been established, associated with the driver supervisors who are part of the new management restructure and is in line with the ever more pervasive proliferation of management circulars and propaganda which we are constantly being issued. With this latest move, it appears the bosses are also trying to psyche us up to rely on these driver supervisors to pursue workplace issues rather than via our union rep.

**Sparks: What's the latest with the STA management restructure?**

WB: In place of the inspectors, the bosses have established a new larger structure consisting of these driver supervisors. Those drivers who were on the bosses' wavelength and had put up their hands for the positions were often successful in securing the jobs. They are sort of "Tin Pot" inspectors and lack some of the powers wielded by inspectors such as being able to issue

finer. Perhaps the bosses consider, that drivers are more likely to approach them on issues, given their lack of the big stick to wave. Will these “Tin Pot” DI’s be able to take the “Tea” from drivers?

**Sparks: What’s the latest with the cabbies?**

WB: I was recently speaking to a cabbie, a fellow transport worker, about their wages. I was shocked to learn that on average their per annum pay was a meagre \$22,000 in the hand after deductions for fuel, superannuation, GST and income tax and the owners’ pay-ins. He explained that a range of factors contribute to this appalling situation such as competition from too many taxis on the road, fines and traffic congestion in the city.

**Sparks: What are your thoughts in regard to the numbers of cars on the road?**

WB: The city is becoming ever more choked with cars. Whilst the Harbour Bridge and Tunnel are struggling to cope. A way of tackling this problem would be for the Govt. to tax motorists for driving their cars in the city. A recent “Background Briefing” Program on ABC Radio threw some important light on the reasons for this traffic gridlock in the city. It particularly focused on the role of the Carr ALP State Govt. in neglecting public transport infrastructure and associated welshing on election promises made to improve public transport services and infrastructure. One such promised project which has not proceeded is a Bus and Train hub at the race track at Origin Park. The Liberals have also been guilty on this front. When Greiner was in power, I wrote a letter to the then Minister of Transport Bruce Baird criticising the construction of the M2 for funnelling more cars and traffic into the city and offered cheap alternatives such as the construction of an O-Bahn to improve bus services. However not all rightwing politicians are pro-car. In California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has been playing an important role in reducing car usage. Recently in the media ex-STA boss Len Harper made some good points regarding the run down state of the NSW railways. He said that even if trains services were to be increased to one every 3 minutes that we do not have railway tracks in Sydney for the increased services. Whilst likely train break downs on lines will compound the inadequate train service problem. Harper also admitted that for the last 25 years the transport system had been run down. He appeared to be expressing an honest opinion and not hiding a political agenda.

**Sparks: What is happening in other states regarding public transport?**

WB: I was recently in the Barossa Valley in South Australia where I come from and learnt that the entire rail line which extends for 40 Kms in the valley was sold to an American multinational company as part of a privatisation drive by the previous Liberal State Govt. As a result, passenger train services are now denied for the towns along the line. Whilst the bus services in the area are very poor. I recall in my younger days that these stations were once quite bustling with well tended lawns and gardens and different trains on the line. Now stations are unused and decaying, with grass growing through the pavement. They have become ghost stations and station shells. Over the years, groups have formed in the local communities to campaign for the Govt. to re-introduce passenger train services on the line. However, they have continually run up against various legal and bureaucratic barriers. Associated with this resistance by the politicians is their acceptance of the neo-liberal notion of “small government” where the government and its departments are completely under the control of big busi-

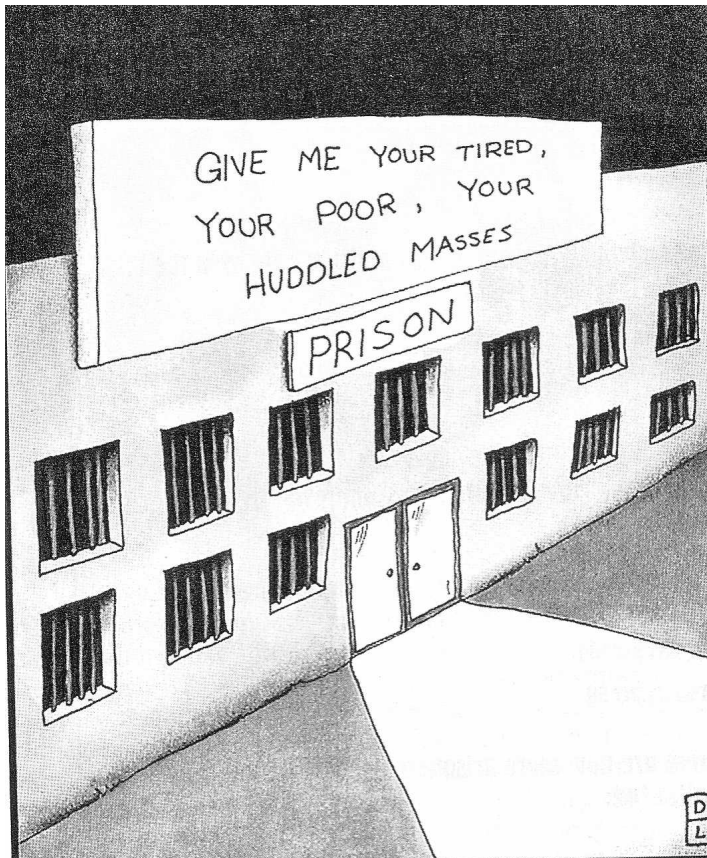
ness and have to go along with their agendas. We in NSW are also likely to face this massive cut back in Government services if we don't take a stand against the privatisation push and halt it.

**Sparks: What are your thoughts on drivers communication with passengers?**

WB: Many drivers will tell you that they have no problems in communicating with passengers. However, in fact many do, but they are just unaware of the barriers which exist. I've seen some drivers find it difficult just to be of service to passengers and are unable to open up to passengers and so develop a rapport with them. We have to get on with them and appreciate them as fellow human beings. This continuing problem was recently highlighted to me when I saw a bus driven by a very experienced driver with passengers sitting with their backs to the front window, indicating an inability of the driver to get passengers on side and have them move down from this hazardous area. Just the other day I noticed another related incident. While on a quiet run, an elderly woman passenger asked the driver to take the bus closer to the curb at the stop and the driver refused to oblige and be of service. Passengers know when a driver is withdrawn and hiding behind barriers. Certainly driver instructors shouldn't just focus on weaknesses in driving but also in regard to communication problems with passengers. Once this problem is tackled, other problems can be more easily resolved.

**Sparks: What's happening on the environmental front?**

WB: A recent program on SBS TV focused on the harmful effects of rising green house gas emission levels on the upper levels of the atmosphere and its role in worsening climate changes. In particular the likelihood of more huge storms and less rain in arid regions of the world. These changes being likely



to come super quick. This program emphasised to me the urgency of getting cars off the road and reducing fuel consumption. This scenario is currently unlikely so the introduction of alternative cars such as electric cars would be a positive development.

I have been particularly disgusted with the Rudd Govt's sell out to Big Business with the lame duck Green House Gas Emissions policy which it recently unveiled, involving an inadequate 5% reduction in green house gas emissions by 2020. In appeasing Big Business and its greed for profits Rudd and State Govt's have failed to make the big cuts necessary to tackle the problem. I feel let down and dismayed.

However, since the early days of the ALP it has often supported very short sighted and reactionary policies. Such as in 1901 it adopted the white Australia policy which restricted immigration to Australia to people of European origin. The Liberals have also had a dark history. Highlighted lately with Howard's "Children Overboard" hysteria. It also just goes to show the lack of leadership shown by the major parties in regard to tackling such a major crisis. A easy step we can take is at election time to vote or stand for a progressive party such as the greens.

I recently went into an environmental shop and on perusing the extensive literature on the severity of the green house gas crisis, I commented to the shop assistant how I was struck by the enormity of the crisis. I have found its severity to be very confronting and its understandable how, many feel quite daunted and fail to heed the need take action and just continue with their normal lives. However we must take serious action. I'm intending to work closely with environmental groups as part of my effort on the issue.

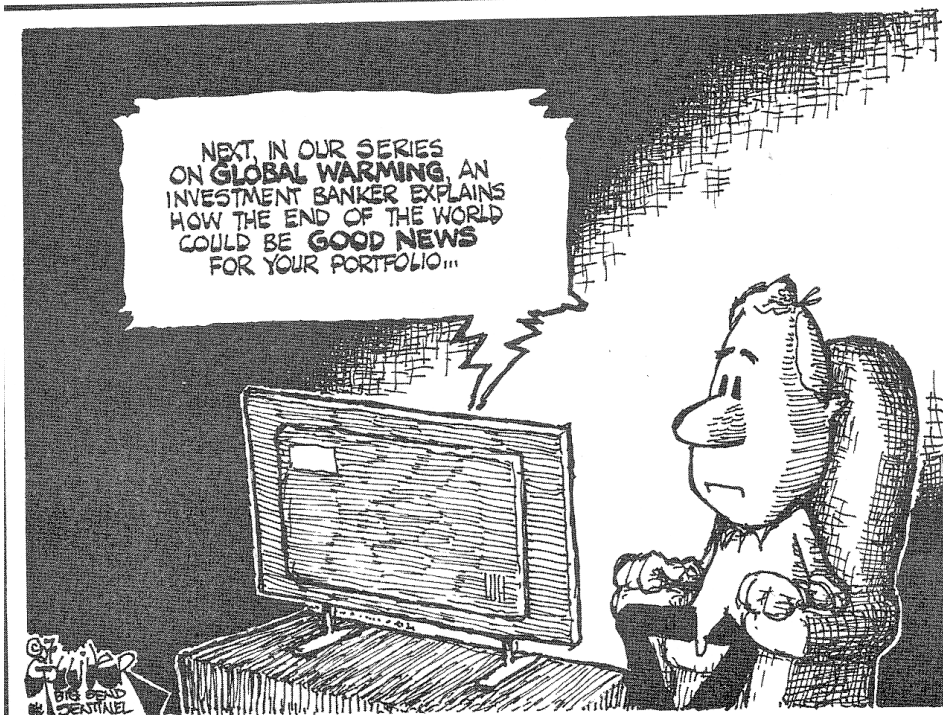
While on a plane recently I struck up a conversation with a palaeontologist – a scientist who studies past eras in the earth's history and associated fossils. I felt privileged to hear the views of such an eminent scientist on the environmental crisis. Initially I thought he was going to take a pro-Govt. view on the subject. However, he was very worried about the severity of the crisis. He told me that based on his studies of different epochs in the earth's history that climate change has played a crucial role in the extinction of many species. He had actually seen these developments from the rock layers he had studied. Today he considered that due to the increases in green houses associated with industrial activities which of course didn't exist millions of years contributing to climatic catastrophes at these times, we will soon see rapid temperature increases and severe climate change which will threaten extinction for many species.

#### **Sparks: What's the latest with bendy buses?**

WB: I was recently speaking to a mechanic who mentioned to me that these buses consume 180 litres of fuel per 100 kilometres. An important contribution to this excessive fuel usage is the idling of these buses at terminuses. With the STA issuing an instruction that the engine on these buses should be turned off at these locations, a significant step would be taken in reducing the STA's contributions to green house gas emissions.

#### **Sparks: What's the latest at Waverley?**

Waverley Driver: There has been some good news lately in regard to the depot fleet. It appears the bosses have been listening to our complaints about the poor standard of buses at the depot. As a result from mid December we are being issued with 30 new Mercedes gas buses.



**Sparks: What are your thoughts on the recent management restructure in the STA?**

WD: It involves the creation of a new layers of management similar to the supervisors and duty managers which were introduced in State Rail now RailCorp under David Hill during the period 1980 to 88. It made State Rail quite top heavy with management positions. When subsequently Greiner and the Liberals came into power, they moved to abolish many of these positions. In my view, it's likely when either a Liberal Govt. comes into power or a change in Govt. policy occurs, we will see many of these positions being abolished.

**Sparks: How are things with bus security?**

WD: There is a growing security crisis on late night bus services operated by Waverley, particularly late on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights when the real trouble starts. Drastic action needs to be urgently taken. Particularly RailCorp Transit Officers need to be deployed on regular patrols on buses at these times to remedy this serious problem.

## **LEICHHARDT DEPOT NEWS**

**Sparks: What's been happening at the depot lately?**

Leichhardt Busie: In late November, the depot was crazy due to the depot renovations construction work. The yard was made a lot narrower due to the installing of temporary fencing,

giving us little room to manoeuvre and making turning tighter. Consequently there had been a spate of minor accidents.

**Sparks: What's been happening with management?**

LB: There has been a major restructuring of management with the introduction of the DOSR system. It has involved the replacement of the previous system of depot inspectors with a layer of Driver Supervisors. Consequently 40 or so old timers who had DI positions have lost their jobs. At Leichhardt, the DI who had been doing the job for 40 years had to reapply for his position. Despite all of his years of experience. He failed to get the job.

Those who won the Driver Supervisor positions appear to lack any experience in the job and could give the impression that they don't know what they are doing. Whilst the bosses can splurge money on these new management jobs, they are unable to pay us a decent wage rise. The meagre 4% pa EBA pay rise hardly meets inflation. The latest new manager who was replacing Danielle while she was on maternity leave, despite being on the job for 2-3 weeks he hadn't bothered to come around to introduce himself to us. With the return of Danielle to her position in recent weeks, the situation with depot management has improved. Following the establishment of the new management structure, a BBQ was held for us to meet up with those who won the Driver Supervisor position at the depot. Typically none of them could be bothered to attend. They appear to have been too busy patting themselves on the back in their offices.

How the bosses view us was dramatically highlighted in a recent edition of Transit Times. There was a diagram of the STA organisation. At the bottom of the structure were drivers, even below the cleaners. However without our work, there would be no jobs for the higher grades.

On a positive note the bosses have dropped their crackdown on accidents. Whereby you had to go for retraining after 3 accidents whether you were at fault or not. On the negative side the bosses are continuing cut back on the length of the broken shifts.

**Sparks: What's happening with the routes?**

LB: Two new bus services associated with the new Metro Buses which operate along Parramatta Rd have been introduced. It's unclear as yet concerning their overall impact. Although they appear to be taking the pressure of the other Parramatta Rd services.

## **BURWOOD DEPOT NEWS**

The ceiling has fallen in at Burwood Depot. In their wisdom, Head Office has removed 13 Volvo buses and transferred them to a Northern Depot and replaced them with 15 Saunas. No action from the union. Who has the hotter working conditions? Strange the new pretend is from the north shore and Burwood Depot did not support him in his election.

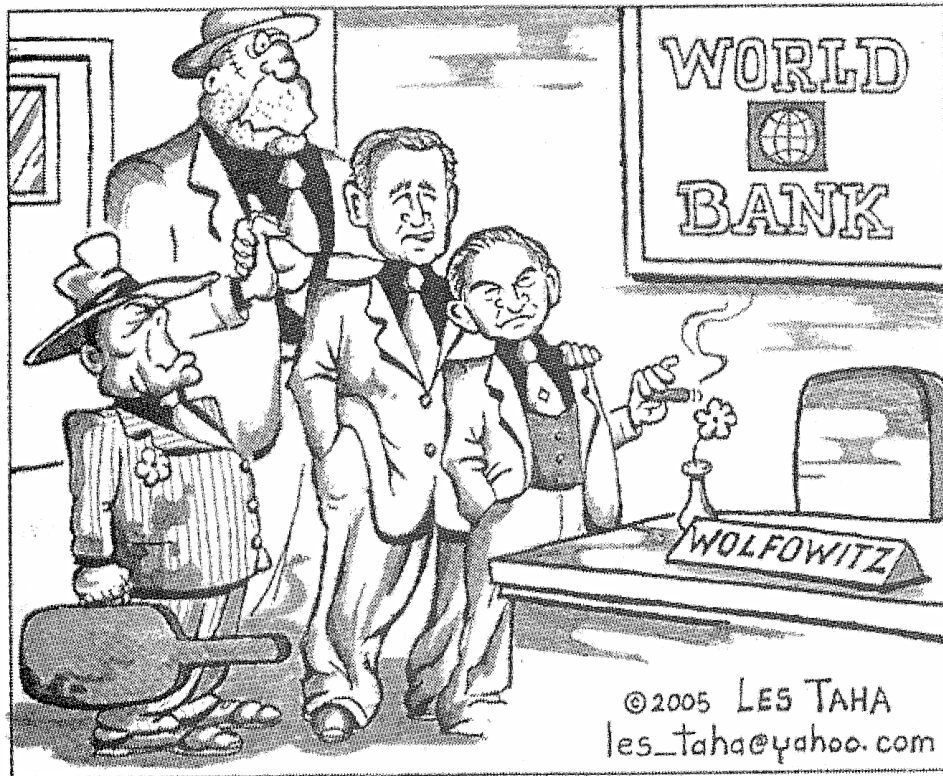
About the matter of the Great Personnel Shuffle, GPS for short. The selection for the positions has placed Yes Men at the helm. This is to the advantage for the Southern Region where

you have one Depot manager for three Depots and all the rest of the managers serve as enforcers. Absolute power! Our Depot manager is a pussy cat!

Now for the big story. The Redfern HQ has finally stirred into action on the camera issue. What has happened? The rank and file drivers have been complaining about the camera issue for years. I was told a story about a certain driver in the Eastern Suburbs who was trapped by the camera. Was it a boy friend or girl friend of an executive member of the union that started the latest action?

In my opinion, the head of the union needs to retire as all he seems to be doing is lining his pockets with our money. We would get better value for our money, employing a legal person.

DROVER



*Pauly, you's done such a good job as a hitman dat me and da boys decided to put you in charge of da loan sharking operation.*

## SYDNEY WHARFIES' NEWS

**Sparks: The last time we spoke to you, the DP World workforce at Port Botany was in the midst of enterprise bargaining. What has happened since then?**

Port Botany Wharfie: The last thing I reported to you was the September 16 yard meeting and the MUA branch secretary Warren Smith's response to a comment from the floor. Smith said that if the workforce was willing to run an industrial campaign – the MUA Branch would back us 100%.

A few of the casuals took him at his word and decided to run a bit of a campaign. As casuals can make themselves unavailable ("scratch") a certain number of shifts every calendar month, the idea was to exercise this right collectively and encourage all casuals to scratch for all shifts on Friday September 26. This scratching en masse was organised without the knowledge of the local union site committee or local MUA officials.

**Sparks: So how did this action go, and how was it received by the Maritime Union officialdom?**

Port Botany Wharfie: Well, members of the local site committee were certainly not happy - once they found out about it, they did their best to put down the "rebellion". Some of the committee members would get up one, two or even three times a shift to try and talk people out of scratching for the Friday.

They really tried to put the scare into people. We were told that the company would see this mass scratching as industrial action that could jeopardise the whole EBA and lead to the company putting on more casuals. Anyone who had scratched was encouraged to talk to the allocators in order to make themselves re-available – no questions asked.

Sheets with a list of all the mobile numbers of the committee members suddenly appeared - the first time this had happened since the new committee was elected over a year ago.

These new found efforts to be proactive and contactable were in stark contrast to the months of minimal report backs and lack of rank and file involvement in the EBA process. The only input the ranks got was a suggestion box. It is fair to say that, until this point, the approach of at least some on the committee had been a case of "this is what we have decided for you".

Local MUA officials were just as unhappy about the proposed mass scratching as members of the local site committee, but they handled the situation a bit differently.

While some on the site committee seemed to take the whole thing extremely personally, the officials (after sensing the mood among the workforce) were a bit more balanced.

That is not to say that they didn't put just as much effort to stop it – they did. There was at least one official on site every day in the lead up to September 26 trying to stop the action from happening.

A big part of their gripe was the fact that this unofficial action was not done the "right way" by going through the structures of the union – the site committee and the MUA Branch.





The officials initially came out with all guns blazing. They issued a special MUA newsletter with the title “Not in the union’s name” which tried to stop this action in its tracks. There were some choice turns of phrase in this leaflet. It described the planned action as “anarchist activity” which was “politically destructive”, “gutless”, “cowardly” and organised by “half baked pseudo revolutionaries”.

But once the officials addressed the labour and copped a bit of flak from members who don’t usually speak in meetings, they began to back pedal a bit. While they were still adamant that the action should not go ahead, they began to at least understand the depth of feeling among the ranks and agreed that some of the criticisms about the EBA process were valid.

As for the day itself, given the pressure that the union applied, things went quite well. There are just under 500 people working on the operations side. About 260 of these are casuals – these are the people that can scratch.

Despite all the pressure between 50 and 80 people – depending on who you talk to – still took the day off. Word is that DP World had to shut down a crane of two for each shift.

It has to be said that this pressure worked in different ways on different people. While some were no doubt scared into not taking the day off, others took a “no one tells me what to do” attitude and scratched anyway. The fact that it had been an extremely busy period at work and the rugby league semi-finals were on did help though.

#### **Sparks: So what happened when it came to voting for the new EBA?**

Port Botany Wharfie: Unfortunately, between the September 26 action and the EBA vote on November 3, there was the economic meltdown.

If you had asked me in late September if the EBA would get voted up, I would have told you no. But in the six weeks between the mass scratching and the EBA vote there was the stock market crash of early October, the \$700 billion US bank bailout, bank collapses in Europe and reports of serious trouble in the US car industry.

Given the uncertainty in the world economy, you can't blame people for thinking that copping a five percent a year pay rise for the loss of a few jobs is such a bad thing.

In the end the vote for the new EBA was overwhelming in favour, close to 90% in fact. Some of those who were directly affected by the few job losses and lengthening of roster hours, such as maintenance workers, first aiders and rail co-ordinators, obviously voted against it. Besides them a small core of oppositionists also voted no.

The other thing to note was that the meeting itself was quite civil, orderly and well chaired. This was a credit to the site committee.

This was in contrast to the last EBA vote three years ago which was disgraceful. We had committee members yelling over the top of and swearing at speakers from the floor and a vote on a contentious EBA (the move to only one 45 minute break) where the yes vote was simply declared carried without a count or a show of hands from the "no" voters.

*[Shane Bentley – the "Port Botany Wharfie" - produces "Vigilance", a socialist bulletin for MUA members in Sydney. See [www.vigilancebulletin.org](http://www.vigilancebulletin.org)].*

## VICTORIAN RAIL NEWS

**In this issue of Sparks, we interview a person who applied for a position of Conductor in V/Line Passenger. Unfortunately this person was terminated after two weeks in training. He has agreed to talk to Sparks so as to expose the termination and his corrupt training.**

**Sparks: How did you find out about the position?**

Trainee: I saw an advertisement in the Melbourne Sun Herald from V/Line advertising for an exciting job at V/Line as Train Conductor.

**Sparks: What was the interview process?**

Trainee: I had to apply for the position via an employment agency. First I was contacted by phone call from the agency. If I had answered the phone in a polite manner then I was asked to do an aptitude test. I sat for the aptitude test with about forty other persons. A couple of weeks after I was interviewed by the consulting firm. I passed this interview and I was referred to V/Line.

**Sparks: What happened?**

Trainee: I was interviewed by the Manager of their train service, a person from Human Resources and the Manager of Spencer Street.

**Sparks: Go on this is interesting.**

Trainee: I was accepted and given a letter to start training at Bendigo for four weeks. I arrived in Bendigo and was introduced to the other persons in the class. The course was conducted by two persons. The female trainer was very good, but the On Train Manager was a pig.

**Sparks: Why was he a pig?**

Trainee: The way he spoke to the class and he said we all had to be professional.

**Sparks: What a joke.**

Trainee: We immediately went into learning train timetables. The course was intensive. I challenged the On Train Manager about an aspect of the course regarding tickets. I said one of the answers he gave about a ticket was incorrect. Because I had the temerity to stand up to this jerk he took an instant dislike to myself.

**Sparks: Why was ticket checking done first?**

Trainee: Originally the test was done at the end of the course, but it was changed to the beginning because I was informed several years ago, a person had been failed in ticket checking and was terminated and refused to return the uniforms as he was fighting the dismissal.

**Sparks: How did you go in the test?**

Trainee: The pass mark was 80% and I obtained 75%. I had to sit for the whole exam again.

**Sparks: Why? I thought they just went over the questions you build in or they gave you an overall test.**

Trainee: I set for the test again with a few other persons in the class. I obtained 79%. I was called before that pig of an on train manager and was told I was to be terminated right away. I was not given a compensatory pass or an oral test. I had to hand all the class books back to Melbourne on the train. I was not given a chance to say good bye to other persons in the class.

**Sparks: What was their reaction?**

Trainee: They were devastated. They helped myself in trying to pass the test – and the union would not help as I was a trainee in class. I have since moved on and obtained employment in another train operating company.

**Sparks: Since we interviewed this trainee I have been informed that there has been another management reshuffle in V/Line and this on train manager has been shunted sideways and in future ticket tests if a person fails the trainee goes over the questions the trainee fails in.**

In a future issue of Sparks we will follow up with other trainees.

**In issues 129 and 130 of Sparks we have interviewed employees about working for V/Line Passengers. In both of these interviews there have been allegations of corruption in both Human Resources area and in management. In this issue we interview two more persons who have applied for a career change. Once again names of these two persons have been changed to protect these people.**

**Sparks: What made you come forward?**

*See Page 22*

# International Transport News

## **NORWEGIAN TRAIN DRIVERS STRIKE FOR GAZA**

On Thursday 8 January all trains in the whole of Norway, and all trams and subways in Oslo, stood still for two minutes in protest against the Israeli invasion. The union issued the following information for passengers:

“Because of the situation in the Gaza Strip, the Locomotive Drivers Union in Norway has decided to demonstrate our solidarity with the Palestinian people. This will be organised by adding two more minutes of stoppage at the station. The same action applies to all passenger trains in Norway simultaneously. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all Israeli troops from the Palestinian territory. Thank you for your understanding”.

## **U.S.A TRUCKIES' NEWS**

Emergency Appeal from IWW Truck Drivers in North Carolina and Virginia  
Sent: Wednesday, January 14, 2009 10:46:50 PM

As many of you know the IWW(Industrial Workers of the World - grass roots controlled union) has been organizing Truck Drivers in Eastern North Carolina and Virginia for much of the past year. In response to our growing power and planned founding convention this upcoming weekend, the bosses have begun firing the union's leadership. Two log drivers and five container haulers have lost their job over the past two days. The union is already discussing legal and direct action means to fight these unjust firing, but right now we need funds to support our fired drivers. These drivers have families to support and this is a part of the country where economic opportunities are very limited. Please offer whatever you can, drivers are counting on you.

Cheques can be sent to the Freight Truckers Organizing Committee at PO Box 274, Waukegan, IL 60079. Please include “emergency relief” in the memo line.

We are in the process of setting a PayPal Acct for online donations. You will be informed as soon as it is ready. Thank you. Past Press Releases from the Freight Truckers Organizing Committee: NC Truckers Form Union, Hold Work Stoppage - United Truckers Cooperative to Picket Outside of Weyerhaeuser Mills <http://www.iww.org/en/node/4486>

## HUNGARY TRANSPORT NEWS

### Strikes hit Hungarian transport industry

by Ed on Dec 15 2008

A strike over pay by Hungarian rail workers severely disrupted traffic on most services on Monday and flights from Budapest Airport were delayed by a six-day-old strike for better working conditions. Railway workers' union VDSZSZ extended a strike it launched in eastern Hungary to all lines after 1700 GMT on Sunday to demand higher wages and a one-off bonus from the sale of state railway firm MAV's freight unit. The strike, which initially caused only minor disruptions on national rail services, brought almost all local and international trains to a halt on Monday, with three of Budapest's four main rail terminals practically at a standstill. MAV said. "Domestic express and intercity rail traffic has practically ceased, and international trains are not leaving for Hungary," MAV communications director Imre Kavalecz said in a statement. The Independent Railway Workers Union has held several strikes over the past year demanding higher wages and a bonus of 250,000 forints (\$1,260) for each worker from the sale of a MAV subsidiary to Austrian national railway OEBB. Separately, a strike by two unions at Budapest Airport entered its sixth day on Monday and was expected to cause delays on most departing flights, the airport operator said.



*Continued From Page 19* Clarence: I have come forward to let your workers know that I applied for a number of positions in V/Line over the years and each time I have observed that Human Resources and Management are just corrupt. I introduce you to Jethro. Jethro has been around for years and has applied for various positions in V/Line. Jethro, a couple of years ago was seconded to a Clerical Position and was shafted.

**Sparks: Over to you Jethro and tell us of your experience.**

Jethro: I was seconded to the position of STAFF CLERK at Spencer Street Station for 6 months whilst the STAFF CLERK was on long service leave. I got along well with all of the staff and was told by management that my work was very good. Unfortunately I did not get on well with one of the clerks and he went to management saying I was useless and hopeless in the position.

**Sparks: In other words this jerk did not want you in the position, so tell us what happened.**

Jethro: Toward the end of my secondment, a permanent position was advertised. I applied for the position but I was not successful so at the end of the secondment. I returned to my job on the station.

**Sparks: You were not successful. Could you tell Sparks about the person who obtained the position.**

Jethro: The person who obtained the position had a relation who was in a prominent position in the Locomotive Division and he leaned on management at Spencer Street to get the person trained in the position and had been coached in the questions to be asked at the interview, thus he was successful in the position. This person had an unfair advantage over other persons who applied for the position.

**Sparks: This is corrupt.**

Clarence: Of course this is corrupt. I will tell you what happened to myself. A couple of years ago I applied for an On Train Supervisor Position on a 6 months secondment and I was not successful. I later found out that the person who obtained the position was coached on how to apply for the job and he followed the train supervisors and had other on the job training around even on his day off to learn the position.

**Sparks: What a crawler.**

Clarence: You can say the person who obtained the job is a crawler but that is what V/Line wants. They want Yes Men. As regards to the Staff Clerk's position, one week due to illness, they were short of one of the staff clerks and one of the station staff suggested that Jethro fill in the position for the day. The reply was management did not want him. As regards the Conductor Supervisor position, the person who was kept in the position after the secondment was completed, eventually became an on Train Supervisor.

**Sparks: It is apparent the place is corrupt and human resources only want Yes Men in the jobs and they will coach people who they want to obtain these positions.**

Clarence and Jethro: Yes you are correct. People who have devoted a large number of years on the job are passed over and are not wanted. No wonder morale is low in the organisation.

**Sparks: I thank you Clarence and Jethro for having the guts to come forward and expose this corruption. Finally I appeal to other V/Line employees in other areas to come and tell Sparks their experiences.**

*Cont from Page 6*      lise sugar. They also had increased appetites and had gained some weight. This occurred after just 4 nights into the sleep deprivation exercise. Sleep debt is now a risk factor for type 2 diabetes as well as heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and cancer.

They found that there was a decrease in the hormone Leptin in the brain of volunteers who were deprived of sleep. Leptin suppresses appetite in normal healthy people. Its absence meant that sleep debt causes a ravenous appetite that goes unfulfilled.

Brain scans of people deprived of sleep show a pattern that can be best described as a “hyper-active brain response”. This is similar in pattern to the emotional responses observed in people with severe psychiatric disorders. There is a disconnect between the brain's amygdala, located in the brain stem and the frontal lobe of the brain (the center of reasoning) when you are sleep deprived. This explains the mood swings and temper tantrums.

Some of the effects that we now attribute to old age could also be a result of severe sleep deprivation which ages the body and mind to a significant degree. Sexual performance is also impaired as libido is diminished by missing essential sleep. This has also been studied.

Along with diet and exercise, sleep can now be added as an essential element in keeping and maintaining a healthy body and mind. Considering the terrible health effects of shift work and sleep deprivation, which goes hand in hand, the approximate 10% shift allowance seems such a paltry compensation for the suffering and sacrifice of our bodies and our lives. Shift penalties need to be lifted to a reasonable amount (maybe 50% of our hourly rate) due to our shortened health expectations and quality of life. They also need to be extended to all hours that are worked outside of normal hours, including weekends. Rostering principles need to be improved by taking into consideration new research into the deleterious health effects of missing sleep.

In all future agreement negotiations we need to put forward claims that take the issue of sleep deprivation seriously. Adequate compensation in the form of greatly increased shift penalties is one way of doing that, but not a total solution. It will however make managers sit up and take notice because their budgets will be targeted. It seems ludicrous that a worker can be lectured by the employer about looking after his/her health or stood down when he/she is not physically fit. That same worker works to a program designed and enforced by the employer according to “business needs”. The worker works to a management program which makes that worker ill because he/she needs to put food on the table. The employer on the other hand accepts none of the blame for the employee's illness. **SOURCES: Dr Peter Wybrow Neuropsychiatrist Pop!Tech Internet Broadcast 60 Minutes US CBS Network Broadcast Jan 2009 Program on new sleep research.**

WITH LIBERTY HANDCUFFED IN THE BACK SEAT,  
THE THOUGHT POLICE ARE IN HOT PURSUIT  
OF HAPPINESS.



*colson*









# What is Democratic Unionism?

Democratic